INTERVIEWEES: KEN ROBERTS, ALAN O'DAY, STAN LITTLE & KEN ARNOLD

INTERVIEWER: Patricia Young

SUBJECT:

DATE: 13 July 1980

TRANSCRIBER: Linda A. Jantzen

PY: This is an interview with Ken Roberts and Alan O'Day and Stan Little for the Historical Society of Palm Desert Oral History Project by Patricia Young on July 13, 1980, at two o'clock in the afternoon at Ken Robert's home on Aaron in Palm Desert.

Let's start today by talking about how you all happened to come to the area and how you met. Since we're talking today because as a group because you all went to school together. Ken, why don't you start.

KR: Okay. I came down to the valley in late forty-nine and early fifty, actually moved here very first part of 1951. My father was a contractor in Santa Monica, and we moved in early fifty-one into a house over on Country Club Drive and Bob Hope, approximately. Little date ranch. And lived down here, went to school at

Washington School in Palm Desert and Jefferson in Indio and into high school at CV, Coachella Valley. And that's where we met was in high school.

PY: So.

AO: Oh, boy! Memory is bad. Let's see. First of all, my dad worked for the Chamber of Commerce in Palm Springs in the early thirties. And my dad and mom lived down there before I was born. I was born in Hollywood when my folks lived in Los Angeles. And at the age of about six or seven, for medical reasons, namely, asthma and allergies that I had developed, the doctor in Los Angeles suggested that we get the kid out of the Los Angeles area and down to where the air is clean. So at that point, we went back down to the desert which was the first time for me to be down there. Packed up everything from our house in Mount Washington near Pasadena, and started a new life in Palm Springs. We lived on Palm Canyon Drive where the Ramada Inn is now in an apartment. And I went to third grade, possibly second and third grade, at St. Theresa School in Palm Springs. And then continued in school around there, North End School I remember and various schools. I went to seventh and eighth grade in Thermal School which is

now John Kelly School. And then finally Coachella Valley High School. I started in 1954. That's all I can remember for now. Yes. Okay.

SL: My story's fairly similar to Alan's. My parents' home was in Long Beach, and they had some, with my grandparents, had some income property there. And, because I was asthmatic, we had to leave. My dad came down to the desert in, I believe, it was 1945. He was the, during the war, he was the head of the Red Cross services for the Long Beach-Santa Monica basic area. And immediately after the war, and I guess it was forty-five, we came down here and moved onto a little ranch in Indio. And John Staples ranch. And then we moved from there out to Palm Village, which is this side of Highway 111 was. And Dad built a, bought a lot and a fellow who was a pharmacist down here, Mr. Collegiate, his son Steve is a pharmacist with Mr. Collegiate in Indio at the Indio, right across from the high school there at that medical service. But anyway, we built a little brick house and I went to school in Indio, second grade. My first grade was up at the beach area. Went to second grade and on, just right on through the school. And the third, I guess it was the

third grade year, my third grade year was the first year they opened the, what is now known as the Washington School on Portola in Palm Desert. And so I came out there. And there was myself, the teacher, two other kids and about a hundred and eighty-five lizards. And that was the whole thing. And then went to Jefferson in Indio, and then on to CV High School, which was where, I guess, we all met, at the high school.

PY: So this is what, about 1954 that you all got together.

KR: Fifty-four, fifty-five, fifty-six, right in there because we represent three different classes at the high school. Alan's was the first and the I was the last, and Stan was in between us.

AO: Yes, you graduated in fifty-nine.

SL: Fifty-nine and you in fifty-eight and sixty.

: And you say you were the last, you mean the last

KR: I was the last, in the last class to graduate from the whole class to graduate from Coachella Valley High School because Indio High School had been built. And they took freshmen and sophomores the year I was a junior, and put them at Indio. And that was the first Indio class.

: So you could imagine the handicap that this guy had in terms of dating. It was tough. It was horrible. I mean really.

PY: How did you come in and messed up the whole thing?

KR: Just did. It was kind of a neat school until Indio High School.

: It was neat, yes.

PY: Why:

KR: Well, we had everything from Bob Hope Drive to the Imperial County line including clear out to Desert Center, all going to Indio High School. Noah's Ark never had more fun than we had there because there was every type of critter you could imagine going to school right there on campus.

: You mean Coachella Valley High.

KR: I'm sorry, yes. Did I say something other than . . .

: You said Indio.

KR: Pardon me. See, I've been brainwashed since then.

: Cut your tongue out.

KR: Yes.

: So you feel like the melting pot was kind of spoiled when Indio.

: Yes.

KR: I still think that.

: It divided the valley up, I think, in terms of the more upper and lower valley, whereas when we were going to school everybody went to Coachella Valley High School, and everybody was all tied together by a thread.

: Yes. Everybody learns how to swim in the same pool, you know, and it was neat because all of the activities, if you were into activities, whether it was sports or speech or drama or whatever, they were doing, CV High School was really doing, you know, its name was right up at the top in all of the state conferences and championships and whatever. And Indio High School hasn't begun to match that yet, where CV was statewide in fifty-eight, fifty-seven, back in there.

: Well, then there were two high schools in the valley, Palm Springs and Coachella Valley. And it was a rivalry between the far upper end of the valley being Palm Springs and everything from about Cathedral City down to clear into Thermal.

: Yes.

: Big power was Palm Springs at that time.

PY: Were they also active in the school? Did it match the league academically?

: The only thing that Palm Springs that I can really

remember honestly excelled over CV High School was in tennis. Everything else, there was swimming, baseball, football, speech, drama, whatever, Palm Springs wasn't even in the league literally, I mean, we had a tremendous cross-cut of people of all ages and types and from the Mexican-Americans to the Blacks to all different cuts of society from the poor to the very rich, lot of Asians. It was a very interesting place to go to school because you met all kinds of people, and that was neat. And you learned how to get along with a lot of people. I mean, third period gym, dad, you were on your own, you know. You either survived or perished. There was no middle group.

: That's true.

: Some of us could sing and entertain, some of us could just run. (laughter)

: Some of us skipped our showers.

: That's true, too. (laughter)

: Out of either lack of time or intimidation.

: Yes.

: I'm not going to take off my clothes. (laughter) Not in this group. We didn't have any choice in the swimming team.

: That's right.

: That's true.

: I was not sports oriented at all. And I took a lot of guff because I physically didn't, I wasn't up to par with a lot of the kids who were in my peer group.

: All us althmatics stuck together.

: Yes.

: That's right.

: That's really true.

: But on one hand, you're talking about a cultural melting pot. On the other hand, in some ways culturally, this was kind of a wasteland, but I was not aware of that until later. Nobody told us we were deprived.

: That's right.

: That or that we were depraved.

: True.

PY: Why don't you mention it?

: Well, I probably am going to have trouble giving examples to follow through on.

: We made our own culture. We had nothing to follow. Is that fair?

: That's . . .

: I mean if we wanted to be entertained, we made it

ourselves. You didn't have . . . We didn't have TV in the valley, for one thing. I mean, you can get some fuzzy pictures out of Mount Wilson. They had about ten watts ERP I think.

: That's right.

: And you'd pick the bounce up off of Mount San Gregonio. You could stand up there and you could twist this big, huge four-bay antenna.

: Spade Cooley was a big deal if you could get him.

: And you could get the bounce off of Mount San Gregonio. And it was not good quality stuff.

: Dad used to bet me, when he wanted to watch television, that I couldn't get the program in. And he'd give me a dime and lose the bet and watch the program; he had it made.

: I lived in Indio when I first started it, Coachella Valley High School. I remember we didn't have a lot of money and getting a TV was a big thing. And, but getting a picture was a bigger thing. We were in a particularly dead area among the whole dead area of Indio, and we had what looked like a fifty-foot antenna which really ate it every time there was a windstorm. And I think that we were just far away from a lot of the things

that kids closer to Los Angeles might have encountered in terms of different types of music or different types of reading and plays, movies, going to the beach, that type of thing.

: I don't know if we suffered . . .

: Museums, libraries.

: Yes.

: That's what I'm trying to get at. You're filling it in. I don't know if we suffered academically. I didn't feel in tune with anything academic anyway, so I just barely made it through high school grade average.

: We all just barely made it through high school.

: We didn't travel like we travel today.

: No.

: It's two hours to the beach and two hours to the mountains, and we do it today. Back then, you didn't.

: There weren't the freeways. I mean, you were really isolated in the valley. It was a two-lane road in and out of here.

: Remember the Banning speed trap?

: Oh, yes.

: Not Banning, Cabazon.

: Cabazon.

: They had a cop in Cabazon, and before the freeway went around Cabazon, that's just about how Cabazon made its living, you know. If you went through Cabazon at thirty-six miles an hour . . .

: You got it.

: You got a ticket.

: They had an ex-rodeo champion in a new Pontiac, which was a bad combination. He used to write tickets like you wouldn't believe.

: All the time. That was fun.

: Are we degressing? This is not . . .

PY: No, it's wonderful. You're covering a lot of subjects that people have touched upon, and now really elaborating on them.

: I got an idea. Let's sing. (laughter)

: That wasn't what I was thinking about. Why don't we talk about like a typical day of getting up and going to school and see what unfolds from that.

: Okay.

: You start.

: I know which one to start it with.

: Well, okay.

: Do you remember the WillieJeepster?

: Oh, yes. I was looking, I've got a picture of it.

: A forty-nine or a fifty Willie's Jeepster, bronze. Well, it was bronze because when I redid the engine, my grandfather gave it to me for fifty bucks and I redid the engine and took it down to Jake, who's still the mechanic downtown at the Texaco. And he worked on it and we drove it around the block and burned it up. And the insurance company painted it for us and put a tyler cover on it and redid the engine.

: That's right.

: So it worked.

: Yes.

: And in the winter there was no top. We just had a white tyler cover on the back, and in the winter it was rather cold.

: We don't tell them about the Buick convertible and throwing firecrackers at the school superintendent, will we?

: No.

: Well, that was later. That came later.

: That's true.

: But we'd get up, and Yon Dangler and you and I and who else?

: Dale Cox.

: And Dale Cox used to go to school in that car. And you'd go out the highway . . .

: You got to understand that in February it's cold. It was freezing. I mean, there was literally ice on the grapevines, you know, as you drive. And we would drive from, Ken would come and pick us, he's the only one that had a car that more or less ran regularly, and he'd come and pick us up.

What I was getting at was, were they the sweatshirts with the hood?

: Yes, and blankets wrapped around us. And we'd go down the highway in the convertible and turn and head toward Lake on, I believe it was Jefferson Street.

: Yes.

: And we hit a puddle one day, and I saw ahead this puddle. I figured it was about that thick, and I thought, boy, it would look nice if the water would go out from the wheels and make this nice white spray. Well, it didn't. It was about eight inches deep and it came right over the top of the car. And Dale Cox in it, we took turns riding in the back seat, and Dale and I had these big, we just bought these sweatshirts and left them in the

car. And whoever the poor fools were that had to ride in the back, Ken had it made because he sat up in front all the time because he drove. But we left these big three sweatshirts with the hoods on them, you know like you see the guys in athletic, and our normal way of going to school, here was the seat. As we would sit back down here like this.

PY: Clear underneath the seat?

: Yes. Well, just down between the back seat and this seat, and we had, remember that big old gray army blanket, over us. And that's how we would ride to school every morning.

: It's a good thing you had the blanket when I hit the puddle because it came right over the front windshield and into the back seat. And it was drenched. But that's how we got to school. First period getting into the pool for PE. I always pulled sixth period PE. The pool ~~was~~ felt ~~kept~~ warm.

: Yes, compared to that. That was horrible.

PY: Now, Ken, since you just joined us, this is Ken Arnold joining us, how are you in relation to all the classes here? Since we have three classes here, are you a fourth or are you . . .

KA: Yes, I'm further down the line than these guys. I'm maybe one of the few desert rats here. I mean, well, I was born in old Hospital approximately

: You're not the only one. That's true. Yes.

KA: And I've lived in Indio, down on Avenue 56 right across from CV High School. And my father's been managing gardens down here, date groves, since 1939.

: You're right. You need to talk to his dad.

KA: And he moved around as the groves moved around so to speak. He managed grape vineyards down in Mecca for a few years, and then moved out to this end of the valley. And then and I've lived, one of the houses I lived in is now designated as a preserve.

: Is that right? (laughter)

KA: The adobe right across from the Catholic church over here.

: I'll be darned!

KA: As a date preserve.

: When you're going down that road at seventy miles an hour when they get it through, and it goes tink around

something

KA: It was built by Bill Cook in 1927, I believe.

: Bill Cook.

KA: He was the county supervisor here for a few years.

: Yes.

KA: And his wife . . .

: I remember that.

KA: Yes, well, Mrs. Cook was my fifth grade teacher. No, she was my fourth grade teacher.

: I'll be darned!

KA: And my father worked as his ranch foreman for a few years. Some of the houses that I lived in on the ranches are designated as health hazards. (laughter)

: Believe it.

: I'll be darned!

: What year did you graduate from CV?

KA: I graduated from Indio High School.

: Oh.

KA: I was one of the, I was the second graduating class, I believe, in sixty-five.

: Just as well he joined us late. (laughter)

KA: Yes, but my connection with this is that in Boy Scouts my father was the assistant scoutmaster and Ken Roberts

was in Boy Scouts at that time, and that's where I met Ken. And my father was also during a period of time in between managing ranches worked in the plastering crew, and they used to build a lot of houses for Gene Roberts.

: I'll be darned!

KA: And in those days he had construction, there weren't that many, but were in the area, Bill Johnson had just about the plastering company at the time. And Patton and Wild were the designers and builders . . .

: That's right.

KA: And Roberts Construction.

: There weren't very many contractors around. The only ones that I remember . . .

: That stayed around.

: That stayed around. Well, there weren't many then either.

: Yes.

: Dad came down here and he probably got this somewhere else, but down here and built Sun Lodges. And he signed for Bud Mhoon's license. The Bud Mhoon that you probably know now that has since retired was his father that got him started, and he signed for Bud Mhoon, Jr.'s license. And Charlie White was here. Those were the only contractors I remember.

: Charlie White. Floyd

: Yes.

: Heavy equipment.

: Yes.

: That's true.

: He's been around forever, too.

: Sure. There weren't too many.

KA: And then I just heard of Joe and Ray Johnson.

: That was back when we had floods down here.

: Oh, we didn't have as many floods; there was enough sand to soak it up.

: That's right.

: Well, we had . . .

: Well, I remember in the third grade up here, it snowed out there, right up at the Washington School, I was in the third grade up there, and out in the yard one afternoon it snowed.

: Yes.

: And I had never seen it snow over there. (laughter)

: I had a similar experience. I saw my first snow in Palm Springs. It stayed on the ground all of about ten seconds.

: Yes, right.

: And I was sick, as I usually was, and I went to the door and looked out, and my mother said, "That's snow." Great.

: It seemed we had more heavy rains then like, word of experience than right now, because I can remember . . .

: It goes in cycles.

: Yes.

: I can remember Rio Del Sol, which is now Bob Hope, when it had the big dip in it, and I can remember navigating it when there was two, three feet of water in it, and not being able to navigate it at times. And I can also remember in fifty-two or three, Dad had three Sun Lodges ready to turn over to be sold to Cliff Henderson, and they got about a sixteen or an eighteen wall of water came down the plain, the flood plain then and wiped them out just exactly like happened several years ago.

: Not so long ago. I've seen just in that little rain we had the other day that someone who washed out and stuff. I can't believe. And it's all because the drainage has been completely changed. The granite doesn't soak it up anymore. It's paved. It's got a condo on it or something and it just

And it all ends up right down in our area.

PY: Down here you mean.

: Well, now they've got something north of us where it just keeps going down to the wash. But a couple of years ago that wasn't true. And we had a drainage ditch, but it was just full of grass and trees and everything else. But what I used to remember when the old wash, before they came through and Yeager Company and cleaned it all out for them and made a nice big wide area, because when we'd have those little flash floods back then, and you would have four to five deep torrent down through that wash. And it had the big S turn down where later they had the radio station down there, and each time it would go around the radio station it would go down.

: Yes.

: And you'd go down there on a rainy day and there would be all this water going down there, which the rapids in the Colorado or something. And really fierce. And the S turn especially, way up on the sides and down around. And they tried to correct that, and they still get it. (laughter)

: They haven't come up with anything better yet.

: Although it does the same thing. I don't understand why they bothered. They could have used the money to build bridges.

: That's city.

: They live on a flood plain; what do you expect?

: Yes. Right.

: High number of flooding. Palm Springs, probably fifty, fifty-one, we lived in a motel at that time. We were taking care of a motel during the summer, and outside my mother and father's bedroom was an awning to shield the bedroom window from the sun. And about four thirty that morning the car horn started honking because it got so wet. So we went out and took care of that, raining on our bathrobes. Went back to bed. My dad slept late. And as it continued to rain, the awning filled with water, probably about a hundred gallons of water. (chuckle) And it finally just dumped the whole thing through the window on him. (laughter) In our family history, that's one of the high points. (laughter) broken by the awning falling in on him, falling through the window on him with all this water coming through.

: Amazing stuff. And that was Palm Springs back then.

You still get the feeling in little nooks and crannies of this area that it isn't civilized after all. I think that's what I'm getting at. You've got the beautiful grass and you've got the beautiful people with their beautiful tans, and every once in awhile you see something that reminds you this place is where the (laughter)

: Remember a couple of years ago when it snowed in Palm Springs and the airport was closed? And people were stuck here and they were stuck elsewhere because no snow on the runway. They had no equipment to clean it off with.

: Yes.

: No in Palm Springs.

: Yes.

: And I've worked up there fixing the automatic sprinkler system and stuff up at the canyon, courts and stuff, tennis courts and stuff, when all of a sudden the clouds came over and it started getting really cold. And people out there playing tennis in their tennis shorts and everything. And they're out there in their, all of their latest stuff, you know. And they start shivering and then the snow starts falling. And they're

out there running around in their tennis togs and it's snowing. And you go down, four hours later you go around the corner and there's somebody's building an eight-foot snowman in the middle of one of the fairways.

: It's amazing!

: We used to watch the snowstorms come in from Blythe area before there, well, there's nothing else to do around here. The thunderstorms would come up from Baja, California, that were And we'd get our big water from those. And you could watch them come in. The horizon would darken, and you could see the lightning in the cloud. And if you would looking at it about eight or nine o'clock at night, about two or three in the morning the storms would hit and we'd get tremendous storms.

: Which is exactly what happened to us just a week or so ago when that came marching right up down, only this time it came down Deep Canyon and kind of zipped up over the mountains instead of doing the usual through-the-front-door thing. And lightning all the way down the valley here and rained over an inch in less than two hours.

: I think the beauty of this whole area accented by the kind of weather that we got is part of all of our memories. I remember some of my happiest times running through the wash in the rain when we lived in Palm Springs. Gee, I wish I could remember San Antonio, I think it was, out in this, no, that was Indio. As you head on Ramon Road, somebody help me, as you head out on Ramon Road away from Palm Springs, that tract of houses that's just beyond the St. Theresa School, the Catholic school, that's out on the right near the airport.

: Oh, yes.

: The Outpost.

: No, before the Outpost.

: It's not that far out. It's right on Escoba and Ramon, and it's back this way from the airport.

: Not too far from the sewage system, unfortunately.

: Right, right.

: Which sometimes would color the afternoon.

: On a bad day, barbecuing.

: You could smell forever.

: Yes, that's right. (laughter)

: But we lived there, and there was this whole untamed

area that, where the desert just dipped down into this wash area of what seemed like miles and miles to a kid my age. And I'd run through there, and I had a secret smoketree that I had built a little fort inside it. All that meant that I'd put a couple of rocks inside, some secret things under the rocks that I'd go out there and find. I'd go running with the dogs or the neighbor's dogs out in the wash. And those are some really pretty memories. The animals, there were so many animals at that time. Rabbits and lizards and you could catch them.

: Oh, yes.

: And I think that was one of the most important parts of my education because everything kind of synthesized. And now I don't know if there's as many animals here, and I don't know if kids pay as much attention.

: They don't.

: You don't get the contact with them today. I had the same thing. We were living in a date orchard. There was a group of tamarisks out behind us, and I used to look across the desert, which is right where Bob Hope Drive goes through, and think nobody will ever, ever destroy that. And now we've got condominiums where

the grapes were that I used to play in the water and the sun in the summertime.

: Yes.

: And had the same, the fort and the lizard and the rabbits and the things hid. We all did.

: I remember when I . . .

: It's not here anymore.

: You don't see it.

: I would walk to school, Washington School, from the Palm Village side and cross the highway. And there was an area that I went through which is right now up behind where the, you know, the Blue Nun Restaurant is, that I guess they're going to tear down, that general area.

: Old Fireside Inn.

: Yes, okay. Well, up behind there, there was nothing. And I would walk through what I later now know to be, was some of General Patton's old, you know, implacements from World War II. And I used to love to go back and forth through there because I could dig down and I would find, like old horns which, to a third grader, was a tremendous treasure, you know, from old jeeps and what not. But I was thinking in terms of the water

that you guys were talking about. In 1957, I remember clear as can be, it was my, what, beginning of my junior year, I guess it was, I was working for KCHB, and I worked Sunday afternoon. Remember, Alan, you got involved with that?

AO: Very much.

: And I had the, I physically couldn't do some of the things that the other guys were doing because most of the guys had had jobs, were doing, you know, really physical things. And so I was always pretty good in terms of speech and, you know, talking to people and what not. So I went down and told people that I would be really great on their radio station. So they were just dumb enough to believe me. And so, they said, "You have experience, of course." And I said, "Oh, certainly, I do." What I had done was hang around a couple of radio stations in Palm Springs for awhile. So Rodney Gorgeous, his dad still owns the station, was out there. And I was supposed to go out at noon and get acclimated to the station. And at one o'clock, he was paying no attention to me at all because his girlfriend was there. The girl that he later married. And so I was just standing around watching where the

switches were. And at one o'clock, he said, "Well, I got to go now. We'll be listening to you. Sign off at seven." And he walked out, and here I am, you know, like basically a sophomore in high school with this whole radio station on my hands. So anyway, to get on with the story, one Sunday afternoon it had been raining and I was playing games with the station in terms of, I was just really bored because always we were playing, you know, this mood music in the afternoons.

: You were on the air.

: Yes. But really boring music, Alan, you know.

AO: I remember.

: Yes. (laughter)

AO: It was all they had to play.

: It was all we had. They used to get them free. So what was the choice? And the, we closed down the station in the afternoon. And there was still a little bit of daylight, and I stopped and picked up the girl I was going steady with, and we were headed out to my folks place for dinner. And this was going down Miles Avenue. And you know where the ditch is on Miles heading out? And being a high school kid, in his dad's new car, with his girlfriend, and I was driving a little faster than

I should have. And I could see this little winking light, and it had been raining like I said, since noon. And this little winking light went up, and so I slowed down, not because I was concerned about the danger but because I saw this little winking light. And . . .

SIDE 2:

: With water, I mean level. It was just kind of flopping up over the sides and . . .

: The ditch on Miles Avenue.

: Yes.

: And big pieces of lumber and tree stumps from tamarisks were coming down. And the tires of the car, no exaggeration, were about three inches into the water just up over the lip of that thing. I just had to (pant, pant) Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. (laughter)

: He was out there again.

: Oh, yes.

: But we drove real slow. (laughter) That water would really, I mean like I say, it was clear when I went to work at noon. And by five o'clock it had filled up, came down that fast. It's amazing what this desert can do when . . . Walt Disney was right.

: Yes.

: A living desert. I want to just parenthetically put in a couple of short animal stories. When I was in grade school living in the area previously we talked about outside Palm Springs at 3780 San Antonio, came back to me, I had a friend, a girl that I used to play with. And her name was Dixie and she lived about a half a mile away. And sometimes on weekends our folks would get together and chat or my mother and her mother, and I'd go over there. And she went to Palm Springs, I guess, grade school because she was about my age. And she paid her lunch money to the three or four kids that had thrown some stones at a tree and knocked a bird's nest out of there or climbed up in the tree. At any rate, she ended up with about four or five sparrows, baby sparrows. And she tried to raise them. And some of them died and finally they all died or were given away except one which she named Hula because sparrows have a habit of when they defecate of shaking their rear ends back and forth. (laughter) So the sparrow's name was Hula, and it was a boy sparrow. And this is indigenous to this area. The sparrows came from England. Some people call them bully sparrows and

there's just thousands, millions, of sparrows around here. But this sparrow was very special and became a member of their household. And sometime later they moved away, and she had to get rid of the sparrow so she gave the sparrow to me, and I brought it home. And this started an eight-year saga of this bird who lived with us for about four of those eight years without even a cage, which said something about the way we lived in Palm Springs at that time because birds tend to be messy and this bird slept on a curtain rod in my room. (laughter) The curtain rod was a multi-colored curtain rod, shortly, but . . .

: Mostly black and white.

: The bird was a complete member of the family. As I say, no cage. When the doorbell would ring, the bird and the dog would go down the hall together to see who was there.

: You had this bird in Indio, didn't you?

: Yes. Well, my mother took it to school. She taught school. She could take the bird to school and show the kids, which I still think was one of the best parts of their education. But I remember waking up in the morning and starting to turn over and down by my feet I would

feel something move and this bird would give kind of an excited bleep. He would wake up when the sun came through my bedroom window and crawl down underneath the covers to my feet. He had fear at all. So this was my little chum and my pal for a large portion of my life. And I don't think that would have happened anywhere but down here.

: True. Interesting.

: I used to go out, just like you say I lived in the date groves right back over here. And this section of the wash was more or less mine when I was growing up. And down just north of where the Gardens Hotel is now, you used to be able to go down into that section of the wash and find Indian pottery and arrowheads.

: Right.

: Yes.

: Just laying all over the ground. Bird points, spear-heads, out of flint, and I still haven't found the flint. But it was down there. They must have brought it down out of the mountains.

: It just came from Salton Sea area. There's some deposits down at the Salton Sea area.

: But one girl, Linda Beal, that I went to school with in the fourth and fifth grade, her mother, I went to school with her and her sister. And they lived on a ranch down just this side of where Gardens is now. And, well, they tore it all out to put in Desert Horizons. And before they leveled off the wash and smoothed it out and everything, you could go down there and find just, she found entire water jugs down there. I mean they're busted in pieces, one piece broken off or something like that.

: Yes.

: And I had several, at one time had several arrowheads and stuff that I found just up and down the wash back here. And we'd find it especially after a rain when we had some pavement and stuff. It would open up a whole new section of strata and you'd go down and dig through it. Great.

: Yes. My kids still go down there and find that stuff. It's still available.

: Well, yes. After they got through smoothing it, after a few rains and it just caved it back in again.

: Yes.

: It's getting back up to the strata again.

: Right.

: But that was, it was always fun to down. And one thing I haven't seen down here, and I was telling Ken a couple of weeks ago, I used to catch horn toads.

: Yes.

: In this area.

: Yes.

: Those are getting rare now.

: You can't find them anymore. Then talk about the fringe-toed lizard, I see those suckers all over the place.

: Yes.

: But a horned toad, you can't, the last time I saw one was when they started leveling down here, building these things back by the park. And I was going down through that area and I found a couple of small ones. But that was the last time I saw horned toads in this area. And I used to, as a kid, I'd tie a string around the horns of the head, and you could stake them out by an ant dig, and then wipe out the Indians. Any

All you need is a horned toad and put him out by an ant dig, he'll clean that sucker right out.

: That's right.

: Did you ever hide back up Deep Canyon?

: Once a long time ago. We used to camp, I could only get to the fence though.

: As Boy Scouts, well, this is before the fence, and we took the same jeeps that we were talking about, I got stuck up there one time, had to hike out. But this is before the research center was there. You could hike up the canyon and camp up there. And there's a whirlpool up in that canyon that probably most people haven't seen. It's big enough to drop a truck in where the water has come down that canyon and cleaned it out. It's probably twenty feet deep and fifteen feet around. We used to spend a lot of time up in there, too. It was a lot greener than the desert. There was occasionally water, and it was a beautiful place to spend your time. And we used to hunt fossils or cross over by Thousand Palms.

: Kilobites.

: No, these were clams, I think.

: Well, they have kilobites . . .

: Clams there, too.

: They do?

: Yes.

: Clams and oyster fossils that you could get out of the

rock over by Thousand Palms. And also some down by the Salton Sea. But that was the big thing with moving around out of doors.

: Down at Martini's around the fish traps, too.

: Yes.

: You'd get the fossil. Everything was down in there. That was where we used to go down there in Boy Scouts. That was always fun with the fossils down around there around the fish traps.

: I remember spending summers doing that kind of stuff, and we also spent a lot of time at the Shadow Mountain Club.

: Oh, yes. Used to live down there.

: The club, I guess, Stan and I were talking about it before we started, but the club started in forty-eight and forty-nine, and I can remember it from about fifty. And it was the big figure eight pool with thirty-foot high slides.

: Yes.

: That they'd taken out then. They don't even allow them anymore.

: Couldn't believe; they don't even have the diving board.

: Straight down and then it would come out and you could

go down anyway you wanted.

: Remember it standing when you were a little kid you can tear, and somebody would throw you off the board

: It took three of us to work up enough nerve just to go out on board.

: Slide.

: Go off the board.

: Just to go off the slide, and then work your way up. And then there was the, what was it, the . . .

: Well, you had a three foot, you had a ten foot.

: Five meter and ten meter platform.

: And a five and a ten meter platform. And then they had Betty Crockett, who was the lifeguard there.

: Yes.

: And you'll probably run into Betty. And they had a swimming program and Tri-D's, which was diving, dining and dancing, a little group that, were you in Tri-D's?

: Nope.

: It was a group that got together, popular duck pond.

: And the duck pond. And they had a movie theatre, set up a great big screen later on.

: I ran the projector down there couple of summers.

: Out on the grass.

: Yes.

: Out on the grass.

: Sat on the grass in the evening.

: Shadow Mountain Club.

: Shadow Mountain Club here in Palm Desert.

: Was a complete family club. You could bring some kids there.

: It was like a community center, really.

: Yes.

: We were a real organized baby sitting operation was what it was.

: Yes.

: And that was good.

: And then they had the little railroad that out there in that one little hutch out there.

: And they had the, I don't know what time of the year they had tennis matches down there, so I guess some of the first organized athletic competition . . .

: In this area.

: In the valley were . . .

: Yes.

: My father ran that one or two years, but Bev Flaggs, I can remember her. Isn't she the one that plays with both hands? She doesn't have a back hand, she hits two forehands. She switches. But we used to come down and watch those. And they had a snack bar.

: Yes.

PY: What was the railroad you were telling me about?

: Oh, they had a little HO railroad. A guy had a little shack out there, a little house. And he had a little HO railroad layout. I mean, complete set up in there. And they had windows all around. You'd go up there and look at it and watch it. And once in awhile you'd catch him down there. I never really knew the full story behind it, but it was listed as the Shadow Mountain Railroad or something like that. A little sign on the side of the building, and it was complete little lake and switching yard and town and all the little miniature people. Before, as far as I'm concerned, before it was popular. It was what was the first layout I'd ever seen where that detailed. And it was quite a little setup he had out there. And they had a merry-go-round deal out there and swings and slides out there. And a small wading pool for the little

kids out there. And a lot of lawn area. There were so many touch football games that went on down there, I think.

: Yes, when the lake was filled with

What did they call those birds that stuck their heads in the water?

: Oh, mud hens.

: Mud hens, little mud hens.

: Yes.

: And they used to have little, remember those paddle boats that they had?

: Yes. Yes.

: Oh, I haven't thought of that in years.

: Sneaked one of those things out and then they'd scream and holler at you.

: Yes.

: There's been an out of there.

: Yes.

: And no way, man, we'd go up, remember they had a little island, I think, too, didn't they?

: They had an island, that's right.

: And all the birds used to get on the island. There was no way you could step on the island. No way.

: No.

: That's where the birds were. All of the birds were there.

: It's unbelievable.

: You could slip and slide on the island, but you'd step on the birds.

: They had a cement and there's nothing worse than a cement where ducks have been living.

: Yes.

: And with a little bit of angle, and about forty ducks and you can't get on that.

: Yes. that's it.

: Forget it.

: That's right.

: When you were talking about, when you mentioned a movie screen setup, it flashed me back to living in Indio and going to Coachella Valley High School. And this was in the Sun Gold Track in Indio. By the way, houses were like, I think my folks paid maybe eleven thousand, maybe fifteen, I don't know.

: That was a big house.

: That was a big house.

: Outrageous! But on Saturdays I'd go to the Aladdin

Theatre in Indio. I'd walk from the house to the Aladdin Theatre and watch the kiddy matinee. I think it was twenty-five cents.

: That's right. I remember going there.

: There would be, not Buck Rogers, but Commando Cody, there would be a Commando Cody serial.

: Right.

: Which always left you hanging.

: Yes.

: Because they never finished. You know, you're never going to get out of this one alive. Then you go back the next week and it wasn't quite the same starting as the ending was, you know.

: It was something to see in the

: Yes. And the movies were very important for me because just something away from the valley and something like imagination trips by watching movies and walking home and thinking about them. And the movies were fascinating, but the most fascinating thing that happened was when the Aladdin Theatre burned down.

: Oh, yes!

: Well, I was one of the first people driving by, and I saw some of the smoke coming out of the roof of the

Aladdin Theatre. And like you're watching television, you don't really think it's real. So I pulled over and parked, and watched this scene unfold as the fire broke through the roof and people came running out of the theatre and the fire engines came. And the people stood on the walks and I was supposed to be home, and I remember, there was a big parking lot on the west side of the theatre and then there was a row of houses that started the residential tract. And I walked to one of those houses because I knew I had to call home. I was an hour late. And I knocked on the door and the lady opened the door and looked at me and looked behind me at this whole theatre up in flames. And she, Oh, Could I use your phone, please. (laughter) Oh, what happened to this. (laughter) They eventually rebuilt it, but . . .

: Yes.

: But wasn't that one of the firebugs that was running around. Then he burned the Aladdin and one of the lumber companies down by old Houston Lumber in Indio.

: Yes.

: And a couple of packing houses.

: Well, the packing house come along the railroad tracks there.

: That was big stuff. I once got a job at the Aladdin Theatre to make some extra money during the summer washing the marque letters. I worked and worked and washed and it seemed like thousands of letters. And they paid me five dollars, and five dollars even then wasn't enough for the work I did.

: That would be tough.

: That's where you had a new whole approach on pigeons after that, right? (laughter) Well, all five dollars.

: Five dollars.

: Five bucks for that.

: Yes.

: I wasn't available after that.

: Oh.

: I had an aunt and uncle that lived in a house on Oasis, right down from where Greyhound Bus Station is now. It's like almost across the street from where like McMahan's and Olsen's Furniture is. There used to be a wooden frame house with a little porch out front. And in the back yard they had a little garage out back. The alley came up from the music store and something else used to be there. But there was like a, about the only place in Indio you could buy

records at the time. And you'd come right up that alley.

: Was this in Indio?

: Yes, right in Indio.

: Custom class in Indio.

: Yes, that was so custom class.

: That's him. And you'd come right up the alley and right into the back of their house. And I remember that. I think my uncle was driving heavy equipment for Massey at the time.

: We used to have parades in Indio. That was where you went for, we didn't go to Palm Springs that much. We tended to go towards the

: Where they had the date festival.

: They were having a parade for at that time.

: What was the parade that we piled everything in the back of the jeepster, the L and the drums and everything else? Weren't you a part of that, or were you?

: Yes, it was one of those rally things for the school.

: It was a pep rally.

: It was a pep rally thing. We had it downtown, roulette serpentine dance. And everybody went to, you know, because we were in the CIF playoffs or some big

: Yes.

: What are we not covering that you want to hear about?

PY: Oh, you're doing great! Go ahead.

: I got so many ideas now that I'm having trouble keeping my mouth shut.

: Let's tell them about our Greyhound Bus trip to Tucson. That was fun. (laughter) Was I on there? (laughter)

: Tucson. What function. (laughter)

: Just to go to Tucson. (laughter)

: I'm winging it.

: Can't tell. Making it up. (laughter)

: How about some of the personalities that we encountered? How about Mr. Scott, the friendly bus driver in Indio, who for years took us all to school and was always, had a smile and then committed suicide.

PY: Yes, but then you were driving, you were on the bus, you said.

: Oh, we bused it part of the time from Palm Desert. We used to meet where Hal Capp has his office now across from the ex-Sunshine Meat, Fish and Liquor, and we'd sit and we'd bus there. That was the first two years of high school. And we'd meet; everyone in Palm Desert would gather right there and, you know, bus off to Indio.

And it was where my dad used to drive the bus.

: That's right.

: He did.

: Okay. Remember at the time, when I was going to high school, he wasn't driving the bus. He quit. I don't know what this is, probably smart.

: Yes.

: But you talk about the old dip on Bob Hope.

: Yes.

: That was the end of the CV bus run.

: Yes. That was it.

: I remember when I was a little kid I used to think it was the neatest thing that my dad was the bus driver, you know. That was a big ego trip for me, and when I was little, I'd get, I don't know how I would work it out, but somehow I would get on the bus and get to ride with him the last little bit of the bus ride. I guess I come down from school and then I'd get on there at Hal Capp's office. And he'd have maybe six or seven kids left, and he'd drive around the corner and he'd stop there. And there was some kids, like Mike who is a landscape architect in Palm Springs now, would get off with his cousin. And then we'd drive down

Bob Hope and go down that big dip. Oh, I used to love that dip. That was good stuff. Also, we had six cylinder white buses, you know. He'd really go honking down and just everybody had to get aside. mowed down. That was the name of the game.

: And then he'd make a U-turn there on Clancey Lane because that was it. And then come back down the dip again. That was, and then like you say, then they started really . . .

: I remember in the early fifties when, well, the late fifties, when they used to have the, like western week here in Palm Desert. And then like it was the Rex Mall's drugstore and Keedy's and everything. And Hopalong Cassidy was here at the time and Gabby Hayes, both. And in western week, I remember my mom worked as a waitress at the Keedys at that time. And they would get all in the little old hats and dresses and everything and waitressing there at the restaurant. And Hoppy would come in in his outfit, you know, with the gun and everything. And Gabby would come in and, oh, it was . . .

: I took pictures over there of mom and Hopalong Cassidy up there at Keedys'.

: That was when Hoppy was living in the black and white house.

: It's still there and it's still black and white.

: Yes.

: Is that right?

: And those poor people in there now upholstery.

Yes. It's still black and white.

: Where is this?

: It's on, it's up on Joshua Tree.

: Yes.

: Street, and it's right where, it's right at the end of where intersects Joshua Tree, right there on the north side is a black and white house. And that was Hopalong Cassidy's.

: Yes.

: That's how this community developed to start with. In the late forties and the early fifties, they had to get some of the personalities down here. When Cliff Henderson was selling and they were developing Palm Desert itself. They knew they had to get some big name people. And evidently, and I don't know it personally, but they went after some of the people like Gabby Hayes bought a Sun Lodge.

: Well, Bing Crosby and brought Pete down with him. And then there's Phil Harris' place up there right next to them. He was like one, two, three, right there. And they're up there against the mountain.

: I remember when I was a little kid, again walking back and forth, I had a lot of experiences walking back and forth to school because I had to . . .

: To do it.

: Yes, spent a lot of time doing it.

: Walked about two miles a day one way. And they were making a movie, and I can't think of the name of the movie, but Joan Crawford was starring in it. And even as a little kid I was always a card nut, you know. And they had this one scene, it was on that street, just a block up above, that is, going south from Hoppy's house. And then about . . .

: Up on Juniper.

: Yes, and then about a half a block down there was a house on the corner, it was a white house, and it had a circle driveway with the street coming out on both roads.

: Yes.

: And they had this big black Cadillac, and it was supposed to roar up and stop and screeched to a halt, and the

guy's supposed to get out and run into the house. And that was the whole scene. And I sat there amazed that they would do this over and over and over and over. And finally I came to the realization that making motion pictures was the biggest bore I'd ever seen in my life. (laughter) And I went on home.

: I ran into about the same thing, let's see, it was about the late fifties, I think. And where we lived, when my mother got off work in the afternoon, she'd come home and it was down, he'd turn off of Highway 111 and turn you down a dirt road down to the ranches to where our place was. Well, that dirt road, the Edison maps refer to it as Power Road. We call it Road. And it runs all the way down through what is now part of Hidden Palms. And it went all the way down to the sand dunes. From one eleven at that time you could see the sand dunes down there. And my mother turns in and she's coming down to our place and she's looking down the road. And she sees a camel caravan going across the desert. And she thought she was going crazy. So she told my father. My father went out and looked. And sure enough down in the wash they had a camel caravan, and they were filming a movie called "The Silver

Chalice," down there.

: Oh, boy.

: And so we all piled in the car and went down as far as we could and we walked over there and watched them. They were having, they were filming a fight scene where a couple of guys come zipping down the wash one way on a couple of camels, and another guy comes running out and they have a big fight right in the middle of the center section of the wash down there. And it was a lot of fun, but like you said, they ran it about the fourth time and you ran out, you started seeing that. I suppose, something else, it's hot out here. But it was, I never forget my mother comes in, "There's a camel caravan out in the desert." (chuckle) Mom, this isn't Saudi Arabia or something like that. But you never see it, well, you still see it down and out.

: But it was the age of civilization at that time.

: At that time.

: Entire shot across Palm Desert and you wouldn't hit anything. There were only a few buildings.

: And lots of them did. I remember in those days when my father would turn me loose with a twenty-caliber single-shot twenty-two and I would go down to the wash and I must have killed so many tin cans. (laughter) But it

was . . . you got to be a crack shot. But it, now you can't, there's no place to touch anything off. If anybody sets off a firearm anywhere around here, they're in big trouble. And in those days, my dad would hand me a box of twenty-two shells and a twenty-two and I'd go down and I'd be gone half a day down at the wash shooting.

: Did you go up to the Sun Air Drive-in Theatres?

: Of course.

: We used to, you still can do it, but they don't do it as much. During the summertime the only movie place that was closed other than the Aladdin, and this was outdoors, you'd take the convertible or whatever you had to drive, fill everybody up, and drive off to the Sun Air. And then everyone would pull in and the chairs and the mats and everything and come out. And you'd lay all over the cars . . .

: Pray for a breeze.

: And pray for a breeze and watch the cartoons. And go up and play on the kid's equipment and then watch the movie. And the great sidelight was, at the Sun Air, especially down here, if you got bored with the movie, you could always watch the meteorites because in the

summertime especially you always seen three or four of them go across the sky somewhere up there behind the Sun Air screen.

: That was fun.

: Oh, yes.

: It was a good place to grow up. You ended up wanting to leave because you felt bored and I think I found a lot of people have come back.

: I never got bored. I didn't need that. They had . . .

: Well.

: I kicked and screamed all the way, but they made me go anyway. (laughter) I didn't get bored with life. It was fun, but you didn't, the city looked more appealing than the desert did. And then finally when you got out and got a chance to go to the city, it really wasn't what it was cracked up to be. And you can see some of us are back because it's a more wholesome healthy place to live now, and it was even better then. I don't know, the way we were always, my father and stuff, I was always out by myself. I mean, I always had to walk across a ranch or across town or something to get to somebody that was my age even. And I grew up more or less very introverted and stuff. And I would go out

with my dog and a toy or something and go out and entertain myself. That's what I had to do.

: I had the same thing. We were here in, like I say, forty-five, forty-six, before really Cliff Henderson. I've got a picture of myself playing at the bottom of the lake before they built the lake, before they built the pool at Shadow Mountain Club. And we could have, you know, shot a twenty-two off of our roof in any direction with no danger of hitting anyone. My closest friend was a guy by the name of Yon Dangler. And Jack and Helen Dangler purchased, well, it's now the White Sun Guest Ranch. Interesting history behind that ranch, but we won't go into that now. But I would have to ride my bike, well, from where we lived to, White Sun Guest Ranch must be what, five miles, maybe four miles anyway. And with those old one-speed balloon tire bikes in the heat of August, you know, that's friendship. You know what I mean? (laughter)

: Did you ever notice that the wind was always blowing in your face.

: Always.

: In the morning you went that way, it was blowing this way; in the afternoon you'd come back this way, it was blowing up from the south.

: Yes. It was a dangerous ride, too, because old Highway 111 doesn't cut around the mountains over by what's now the Rusty Pelican. It cuts across, but the old highway used to wind back in there which is Pass.

: Yes. But I would never be allowed to ride my bike that way. I had to go the back way, all those weird little back roads through the melon patch and through the corn patch and all that. Alan was talking about personalities. People which, you know, things are important and all that, but the people that you grew up with and knew really molded the characters, and we were all characters here certainly. That's obvious. Who are some of the people that you remember?

: You mentioned Mr. Scott. I remember him from Inn. And he used to take us out and we'd follow the carrot trucks and then we'd stop. And we always in the drivers ed car, you know that blue Plymouth that we almost all of us piled up.

: Yes.

: That somebody tried to peel out and it wouldn't

: We always carried paper bags in the back of the drivers

ed car so we could stop and at the intersection because when the carrot trucks would go around the corner, all the carrots would fall off. So we'd all get out (laughter) big bag of carrots. (laughter)

: Yes.

: Anyway, go ahead.

: Oh, I'm just, there's such a maze of people. Way back to, I remember Ed the Hermit walking down the street.

: Yes.

: To Palm Springs when I was a little kid. And I remember high school teachers, how they affected me. I thought it was so funny that . . .

: Would you like to lay down and tell about it. (laughter) Here's to Persia. (laughter)

: There was a girls' gym teacher named Mrs. (laughter) That was one of the funniest things that happened in high school. And Mr. the glee club teacher.

PY: What was funny about Mrs.

: Her name.

PY: Oh.

: (laughter) You take eighty boys playing with names, that was the first one that started the whole thing

rolling.

: Yes.

: And the stories and rumors, you know, that went around high school. I remember they got all out of proportion.

: We had a librarian at Indio High School, I remember, that got picked up for driving down through Palm Springs on and some . . .

: In her convertible with the top down.

: In a convertible.

: Yes.

: The truck driver looked down and thought that was a little strange, even for Palm Springs at that time of year. (laughter) Oh, what the heck. We're all just one big family. We didn't know it.

: Yes.

: I remember teachers, I remember Mr. Paris who attempted to teach Spanish.

: Yes.

: Not very successfully.

: He was from Remember? (laughter) He was my Spanish teacher.

: Yes. And then there was the Spanish teacher with the southern accent, Mrs.

: Buenos dios, classy

(laughter)

: I wondered why, I keep trying to explain the C I got in Spanish to my dad. My brother, who has since gone on way after an education, got a B out of her, too. Finally, twenty-five years later, Dad believes me, "Yes, he must have been rough."

: She was bad!

: I picture many, many kids walking around talking Spanish with a southern accent, nobody understanding them, you know.

: What the hell did you say?

: Nobody else remembered the southern Spanish

: The kids that we went to school with in terms of, you know, we talk about minority education. Who were the minority guys? We've know what it means to be a minority.

: Yes.

: In some ways.

: That's a whole big subject.

: I remember, Alan, with your, I'm looking for a word, but I can't come up with it. Remember the type of songs, Spanish songs, that you would write?

: That I would write.

: Yes. Remember an experience that these people in the

Mexican culture and the particular types of songs that hadn't been written for I don't know how long, and here is this gringo kid who is out speaking in Spanish and writing original authentic Mexican music. You really blew a lot of minds away.

: Put authentic in quotes.

: Yes.

: Well, it was authentic so a lot of grandpas and grandmas who weren't too quick to pick up on it were accepting it and really . . .

: Yes.

: They'd sit there with tears in their eyes listening to it. I remember that experience out at one house.

AO: Well, thank you. That's wonderful.

: Let's back up and look at this because what happened is I was trying to find out who I was. And the first year of high school I was mostly a clown. I could do

and we were wheezers. (laughter)

: I was a wheezer, that's right. And I was trying to figure out how to get attention and didn't know what to do with it when I had it. And it was really miserable. I remember the summer before my year in the eighth grade, I . . .

SIDE 3:

(laughter)

: I'm no fool. You'll never get that again. (laughter) Anyway, are we on again?

PY: Yes.

: Beginning high school was very painful.

: Pat is blowing her nose here in the background. That's not a wind condition. (laughter)

: But I finally realized that my chicken scratching on the piano could be adapted to something that was happening on the radio. That was kind of our link to civilization, and it was called rock and roll. And I remember hearing "Rock Around the Clock" on the radio and practically having an orgasm. And going to see the movie and feeling the same way. And calling home from the movie theatre to ask if I could see it again. And my mother said, "Why?" I said, "Well, I thought I might do a report on it." And she said, "Really?"

: That's always a goer.

: Yes. She said, "Really?" And I said, "No, I just really want to see it." She said, "No, come home now." "Thanks, Mom." (laughter) Anyway, I made up for it. But . . .

: Now you have a print of the film, right? (laughter)

: Anyway, things like that were just soul stirring things. Little Richard records and Jerry Lee Lewis. There was a certain type of rock and roll that got played down here and got accepted that wasn't necessarily the same as what was happening in the city. And it was that kind of R and D flavored rock and roll with some of the melodic three-cord things that a lot of the . . .

: Don't get too deep on this now.

: Groups. Yes, yes. (laughter) You know, when you'd have to race third and then a long minute clip. (laughter) But . . .

: I'm just a farm boy. (laughter)

: But that stuff was really, I really woke up when that affected me. And I tried to start picking out the chords on the piano and make a long story short, as I'm trying to do, believe me, I ended up putting together, getting together with other guys who were playing instruments and trying to put bands together. And the very first band was one called The Imperials. And I think it was in my sophomore year. I remember Jack Lang who played piano and sang and took downers (laughter). Well, something was wrong, Jack. I mean, when you say, hello, and the guy's stuck for an answer. (laughter)

Remember him backing through the parking lot, you know. (laughter) I hear that he's incarcerated now, but he taught me how to play left hand on the piano.

: Incarcerated. It's (laughter)

: You're going to have a large editing job with all this baloney, but he taught me how to play a left-hand figure on the piano. And there was some other guy that played drums, Price Deal or Jimmy Deal, somebody who was around there. And then the saxophone player and these characters and I would get together, even though we were different as the ends of the earth, or at least it seemed that way to me, when we got together and played music something nice came out. And from The Imperials it went to some other group, and we were always trying to figure out how to put in our time with playing in between classes because it was infinite and more urgent to put together rock and roll songs than it was to study anything. And eventually out of this came a group called, that we called The Renees. And, oh, before The Renees there was a time when there was a group called The Shoves. And I named the group The Shoves. I figured if people didn't like our music, they'd shove it. (laughter) But eventually became The Renees and about six months after The Renees were

formed, I looked at the other members of the group and realized I was the only non-Mexican in the group. That's how it actually happened.

: Let me say something, okay? Historically, and the reason I think this is important is because of, I think the music that you more typified than anybody here, but that we all participated in was something that you developed yourself. For instance, needed an instrument, and I was kind of the, I was The Renee groupee. I didn't play, but I was there and helped. And not as, you know, not every time, but often. And I remember . . .

AO: Moral support.

: Moral support, thank you, Alan. Any tidbit, God bless you. Anyway, the lead guitarist didn't show up. This is just my story, okay?

: Okay.

: Couldn't come or decided he was going to make another gig or whatever, and so Alan reacted; first he was crushed and then got angry. I never saw you so angry as this guy. And you said, "My God, I'll play lead guitar tonight." And it was sort of like that jumping up on the table and ripping off your shirt, a moment in time. And he had an old radio, and I'm talking the old type tube, vacuum tube radios, and started tearing it apart. And Alan built an electric guitar. And . . .

: No amplifier.

: Yes, I mean the amplifier part. And nobody told Alan he couldn't play guitar, so he just played it anyway. And that night showed up and did the dance playing lead electric guitar. But in terms of the ethnic thing, I remember a dance that you played at, and I was playing an organ. I remember that, for a few numbers, up at the old Elk's Lodge, remember upstairs. And there was another dance for the telephone company employees. You had a guy, you said . . .

: He's downstairs.

: The telephone thing was downstairs over in the Chalimar Building or . . . I'm talking two or three gigs now. Anyway, this one guy was a trumpet player, and was from Mexico. And he wasn't good until he was just a little loaded. And I remember you talking about encouraging him to drink a little bit that afternoon. He could blow and breath in at the same time.

: That's right.

: And he would never, he wouldn't quit playing. He could stay there all evening.

: Yes. He could play enough for five minutes without stopping.

: And I mean, pretty soon he would stop dancing, you know,

the big song was "Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White," which really, you know, showcased the trumpet.

: Yes.

: And people would just quit dancing and watch this guy because he'd go, dah, dah, dah, dah, and stayed right there for twenty minutes trying to find the rest of the music while he was holding this one note. (laughter) We would walk off stage. You know, this was a big hit. It was a piece of business, you know. We'd walk off stage when he would hold the note. Everybody's going (laughter) What the hell is going on.

: In a little while, come back and go on.

: Right.

: We went to get some coffee.

: This was the time when people started taking Alan seriously. And it was really the first, I think, because here was this really huge orchestra, you know, and Alan O'Day who started out in the back end of my dad's history class with harmonica that was on his key chain. (laughter) But not just showcasing Alan, what I'm saying is that a lot of things, a lot of talents, a lot of things developed because there was no place else to go.

: Do it yourself.

: Yes.

: It was like nobody told me I couldn't be a disc jockey, so I did and put myself through college on it. And went on and did a whole bunch of stuff . . .

: Yes.

: Just because you start, you know. And you just . . .

: The alternative was . . .

: You just do it.

: Wandering around out in the desert.

: Yes. Just sitting around with your finger in your ear, and listen to the cactus grow, needles. You know, that was it.

: Which we all did that, too, then.

: A lot of that.

: The Renees, the significance of The Renees, which still goes on, people in the valley still talk about it, was that it exemplified the relationship between the Mexican-Americans and the non-Mexican-Americans. And they still don't have words that are easy to use for that, which is interesting.

: Yes.

: In the newspaper, I remember they did an article on us, and in trying to describe that, they said, non-Spanish

speaking member of the group. I was the non-Spanish, which wasn't true, man, because I could out Espanole. (laughter)

You play this, I'm going to cut you, man. (laughter) But, and that's another thing because a lot of the things that people say when they're doing takeoffs on Mexican speech weren't that way at all down here.

: True.

: No.

: No.

: I remember Sal Valesquez who was the oldest member of our band, he was old when he was in high school.

: That's true.

: He must be over a hundred now. (laughter)

And the first time I met Sal Valesquez was when I, there was a talent show at the Aladdin Theatre that they had on a weekend afternoon. And I joined it to try to win first prize by doing pantomimes. And this kid, Sal Valesquez, brought out a saxophone and a harmonica. They were in different keys, but he played the same song on one and then on the other. And then there was this guy, real handsome Mexican guy, named Phil Carosco. And Phil, I never got over it, you won

first place singing, "I'm in the mood for love." (laughter) And the girls were like, you know, there wasn't a dry seat in the house. (laughter) But I was the little clown running around doing my pantomime. Hey, Stan Freberg. And this didn't go over well for the radio audience as it was on KCMJ, you know, broadcasted. And all they heard was a record, right?

: Yes.

: I remember the time that I was assigned radio, working for WIRO in, back in Peoria, Illinois, and I'd cover the canoe races on radio. That was exciting. (laughter) Very exciting.

: Yes.

: But the Mexican people in my growing up time were a very significant part of my attitudes in my life. And I got such a rich cultural heritage musically and emotionally from them.

: A lot of tamales, too.

: And a lot of great tamales (chuckle) and a lot of midnight dinners in kitchens that were always open. There was always food cooking, which was very much unlike my life because my dad was sick and my mother was working, and there wasn't a lot going on domestically

for me. But I remember somebody came over and, a girl that I really liked, I asked her to come over one afternoon after school. And she looked at the condition of our house, and said, "Are you moving?" (laughter) And we weren't. But the music blended together. This band played rock and roll songs, and Mexican and boleros, some cha chas.

:

: That's that big polka where everybody gets in a line and kind of goes across the floor, you know, to this polka rhythm. And . . .

: I remember those.

: Oh, man, there were things that happened to me because of the unique position of being in this band that didn't happen to a lot of people. I would be the only non-Spanish speaking person at a wedding, great big Mexican celebration, you know, these weddings. And there would be these great big lines doing the across, and maybe somebody get in a fight because the lines would bump into each other, and they'd have these big fights. But I want to say because you were making a joke about getting knifed that I never had any trouble from the Mexican segment of the population. I never was threatened.

I never was intimidated. For some reason, maybe it was because I was so naive that I didn't have fear. I just looked at everybody as, well, they know I'm in The Renes or something.

: They'd never mess with the Wheezers, you know. (laughter)

: But other people did.

: Yes.

: And I got my share of bullying in high school.

: Yes.

: And my fear of scars from it. And I'm sure the way I acted because I was an only child and kind of had been sick a lot. And you can relate to that, Stan.

: Yes.

: I've been like, when your family focuses so much attention on you, you kind of end of focusing a lot of attention on yourself. I'm sure I brought on a lot of that, but the freedom that I had in both communities was incredible.

: Yes.

: In looking back on it. And it was before there was them and us for me.

: Yes.

: It was before the Blacks over here, and that was one of

the nicest parts for me of growing up here.

: And that was the nice part about CV High School was because it was really, you talk about integration. There was integration. I mean, there was no choice. There was one school and everybody dumped into it.

: Yes.

: No, I left the valley, I didn't realize there was any problem.

: Yes.

: Really.

: Me either.

: That's right.

: No idea whatsoever that a problem. There's nothing wrong.

: Yes.

: Blacks, Whites, Mexicans, everybody goes to school.

: When I was going to school, too, I mean, all my friends, like I said I was raised on the ranch right here, and there was me. And the closest guy around, which has been my friend forever, is Frank Lopez. And Frank and I went through Boy Scouts, went through school up here together. And we just, like half the time I lived over at Frank's house and the other half of the

time he lived over at my house.

: Yes.

: There in the date orchards. I mean, you know, and we were all the usual things, B-B gun fights.

: Sure.

: At each other and, you know, which my father was ready to skin both of us.

: Yes.

: Marched, took us both back there, and when he spoke, we were in bad trouble for that at that time. But Frank's father spoke very little English. His mother, I think, spoke it. I couldn't swear to it. Then there's Frank's, when I was with Frank, his older sister Alice and this is to Diane, we're still at home. And, but I didn't speak Spanish; I still don't. But I had no problem in that household. I mean like I said, I lived down there. I ate down there, everything else, you know, and Frank was up at our place all the time.

: There's a lot, though, we're kind of assuming that that is no more. There's a lot of that still going on that a culturation difference is taking place in the valley. It depends upon, I think, the attitudinal feelings that people bring.

: Yes.

: Or it's worse yet because like, I mean, Alan and I, the only way we got through biology, we were laughing when we were talking about trilabites, you know. I turned to Alan and I said, "They must have passed biology." Because the only reason, honest to God, the only reason that I and Alan passed biology is because we made a movie. That's true. Remember the snake eating the mouse? Okay. It was a real saga. Anyway . . .

: should have seen you.

: Yes.

: And the girls would sit there and scream, "Oh, my God!" But they'd sit there and watch it, but on the movie they didn't like it.

: Yes.

: Anyway, academics was not my big deal, which was embarrassing to my dad who was head of the social studies department.

: Yes.

: And then later on to come back after going through kind of an academic thing and having finished my doctorate and then looking in terms of the communication methodologies between the cultures that has to do, I think,

not so much with the between the cultures, but more between the socio-economic groups because basically in terms of kids, we were pretty much poor kids. I mean we didn't have, you know, I don't know of any of us that had, you know, the parents hand you twenty;dollar bill and say, "Have a nice Saturday afternoon."

: No way.

: I saw a twenty-dollar bill once; it was when my dad gave it to my mother during my high school time.

: Yes.

: It's probably the period it was. It was, but so many of the kids that I see now down here, I mean, my godfreys, I can't believe. They're, you know.

: The money they have.

: The money is just unbelievable.

: Yes. It's a whole different world.

: We didn't have the background or pressures that almost any other part of the country had. This is going back to what we started on at the very beginning. We were alone down here.

: Yes.

: If you'd grown up in the deep south, you had all these

prejudices and all the hundreds of years of prejudices behind you.

: Yes.

: Down here we didn't. We were the first. It was a chance to start over.

: Yes.

: And it worked.

: That's interesting; you're right.

: Well, I remember, like you say, I practically lived down at the Lopez house. And the other half of the time he was living up there.

: What was the choice?

: Well, and then a friend of mine down here, the Pryor family.

: Nobody told you the Lopezes weren't neat people.

: Yes.

: Oh, I knew they were.

: Yes.

: But nobody every mentioned great.

: Oh, yes. (laughter)

: Mexican

: Was there a prejudice issue at CV High School? Was there a separation between Mexicans and non-Mexicans,

between Blacks and Mexicans? I think there was some.

sitting here and saying that we're very fortunate that we weren't influenced that way. But I think there was some.

: I'm sure there's more between the Blacks and the Mexicans.

: Yes.

: Than there was between, the Whites were the third group.

: That's still true.

: And didn't get bothered much, but the Blacks and the Mexicans had the disagreement.

PY: Were there many Blacks?

: Oh.

: Quite a few.

: I think of the track team it was all Blacks.

: At night, you couldn't tell who weren't.

: It was California's state champion team. Football team was kind of a mixed bag.

: Yes. I remember Coach Pryor, excuse me.

: Oh, yes.

: Narrating on the local radio station the big run by ~~Juamenez~~, and saying, he's down to the twenty. Now ~~Juamanez~~ is down to the ten. (laughter) He'd never say ~~Juamanez.~~ (laughter) After all, I think the guy's

name was Jimanez.

: Why fight it? Jimanez. We're going to get it right. Right.

: You know, we spent a lot of time on buses, speaking of athletic events, going out of town to places. Either following the athletic event. I swam, and the swimming team was top in southern California.

: Everything was.

: We were spoiled rotten, but we borrowed the football games, and we had a long distance to go. And you got a lot of time to sit on that bus and ride with people and get to know them.

: Yes.

: We had at that time the longest school bus ride in the United States, was in our district.

: That's right.. drove from . . .

: Eagle Mountain.

: Yes. From Eagle Mountain to CV High School and back every day. And I remember the day they came in. And the shop department, I don't know if you were in on this or heard about this. Here comes the bus, and the whole shop crew is waiting for this bus to get there because when the bus went back out that afternoon, it

had a new engine and transmission in it. And the shop guys got special permission to be out of all their other classes because the top students got to do that job. And they were all excited about that, waiting for that bus to go.

: A wonderful story.

: Thank you.

: That's great.

: I'm going to go lay down now. (laughter)

: Bombadeer used to consistently blow the governor off of that. They only used to go fifty-five or sixty miles an hour. There's no way they could . . .

: Coming down the grade. He couldn't . . . It was an hour and fifteen or twenty minutes.

: He was hauling down to that.

: Yes.

: Well, he could have. (laughter)

: Started there That's true, too. (laughter)

: It took an hour and a half out of their day both ways, each way.

: Yes.

: Took an hour and a half out of their day roughly. And,

boy, he really used to push that. He was the biology teacher. I want to touch on something with some help that is not pleasant memories, but is definitely something that ought to be preserved. And that is the tragedy of the student that we lost as a result of everybody driving like a bat out of hell. And I still don't understand why all this happened, but we were subjected to, it seems to me, much more than our share of losses of fellow kids who got killed in auto accidents.

: Yes.

: There were two on graduation evening.

: There were different types of things. The driving because of the distances.

: That's it. They were so spread out.

: The natural layout of the agricultural area in the CV to Indio, CV to Palm Desert area where you've got these straight one-mile runs with deadly intersections. The fact that the kids if they wanted to get into custom cars which was the big thing you had to go to Tijuana. And that was a run down eighty-six and back. And I remember Joe Malone was killed in his car coming back from Tijuana. Not an ounce of alcohol in the kid's

body. Just fell asleep at the wheel and died. But even worse, well, as bad as that, that kid that I was in high school with coming back. He was working in Palm Springs and he had a little Triumph two-fifty motorcycle. And he was coming back out Ramon, out past the airport, and heading out to catch Rio Del Sol at that time when you come back into Palm Desert. Dusk dark, and a guy pulled out in a Cadillac past the Lincoln and he was going from, I don't know, one party to the next or something. But he was headed for the airport, student guilds, and just took the motorcycle out right into the windshield.

PY: Was drinking a problem in the school? I've gotten the impression from people who were either working or retired at that time that there was a lot of drinking going on because there wasn't a lot of other entertainment for older people.

: I think so. Are you talking about adult alcoholism?

PY: Adult, was it a problem

: Yes. I was impressed when I was growing up that there was a lot of it going on.

: Yes.

PY: But was it going on amongst people your age at that point?

: Some were a problem. Yes. There were the parties, sand dune parties.

: The sand dune beer bashes.

: That's right.

AO: But I saw a lot of stuff because we played in various areas. The band saw stuff that would lead you to believe that there was a seedier side to this whole issue. We were offered, I remember we played out at the Salton Sea. And for these characters. I don't remember their names. Probably just as well. But they hired us to play out there, they gave each of the guys in the band a little packet of pills that said, "Take these, they'll make you play better."

: Sal dropped his on the ground. And Johnny was laughing, you know. Nobody tried it. You know, we weren't oriented that way. And it turned out that they were uppers. And later on we participated in some minor way with the police department in identifying one of these characters and they busted him. And it was, you know, it goes, every time I see the guys we always laugh about it, and say, "Here take one of these, it'll make you play better." (laughter) That's true of some imaginery thing. But we never had, I don't know, I wasn't into

it or something, but I never, especially when I was out here in Palm Desert. The guys I ran around with, none of them were into drugs and marijuana or beer, you know.

: Yes.

: Everybody was trying to get a six-pack of beer somewhere and go out and drink on a Saturday night.

:: Yes, I remember that. I remember guys under eighteen. But somebody (laughter) and messing their hair up and showing the hair on their chest and walking, lumbering into a store trying to look eighteen, you know. I wish you could show this on the tape. I'm talking about Eddie Savant who was . . .

: That's right.

: When he was only seventeen.

: Oh, I had a guy that I went through the eighth grade with that looks twenty-one. (laughter) I've always had some suspicions about some of these, especially Sal Valesquez. He was fifty when he graduated. (laughter) He just looked that way.

: Oh, yes. Definitely. Oh, yes.

: I think they finally, this one guy, I think they finally put him in high school because he threatened one of the teacher's lives or something. So they sent him to CV.

: Oh, we had a lot of drinking, and I think in some cases we were lucky because we missed the drug, so-called drug era.

: Yes. We did.

: Speaking for myself, I was real glad. And as a result, I didn't get into marijaana. The only thing I did was drink. And that was my vice or that was my way of letting down. And when I did try marijuana, it was more than I wanted to handle. I didn't particularly like the feeling. And I think it's because of where I came from and the whole attitude. I wanted to be in control.

: Yes.

: I didn't mind feeling good, but I kind of wanted to stay in control of myself. And so that was my own personal contact with it, was very brief. I don't know what happened with you.

: Well, my father, down on the ranch and everything, my father was out there, I mean, every day, out there with thsee ranches. You had to babysit those grapes and those date trees. People don't realize the care that goes into some of these ranches to do it right. And I mean he would come in after a really rotten hard day out on the tractor, and he'd sit down and maybe one of

my uncles would come over or something. And it was nothing to go through a case of beer in an evening, you know.

: Yes.

: But, I mean, this guy's out there, he's been drinking water and stuff all day. And I guess they say that there's no way that you can physically drink enough water to replace what your body will lose out there in a hundred and twenty degree heat when you're working hard. And, but they would sit there and they'd put all this beer away. Okay. And, but they would like start it as soon as they quit work, which was about four o'clock in the afternoon. It was just too hot to work. And they just started then. And they would be on until ten-thirty, eleven at night. And I only remember my personal recollections of seeing my father drunk once, that I personally, it sunk in, he is inebriated. And I have seen that man put away beer, Schultz would be proud to call him a customer. (laughter) I tell you. And my uncles, too. But I've only seen them really, I mean I've seen them lightheaded and a little happy and stuff. But I mean just gone only once in my life.

: Yes.

: And they would just think they were beer drinkers. That was all he drank. (phone rings) And so myself that's what I am now. I'm a beer drinker. And I will sit down and I will drink beer, and forget the mixed drinks. I mean, when I go out and socialize or something maybe, but just a mixed drink and that's it.

: Yes.

: And as far as marijuana and any of the drugs and stuff, just, they never even appeal to me. And my father smokes cigars. My mother didn't smoke, and my father smokes cigars. And I always, I don't know, he used to smoke cigarettes, then he went to cigars. He went from, I don't know, twelve packs a day to two cigars or something like that.

: Yes.

: And he just chews them. His habit. And smoking, just, I tried smoking cigarettes and it just, well, my first experience was about my last. I just said that's not for me. And I've lived with cigars, and my father always said, you know, there it is, you know. If you want to smoke, just, you know, light up.

: The biggest party I ever saw down here that involved, you know, drinking was, I was working with a group on film called, "Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World." And Stanley Kramer was

: Car's still up there.

: Yes.

: Yes. It's still there. (laughter)

: But we shot it in Long Beachand Santa Monica and down here. And, in fact, right up seventy-four knew where we lived there, where it started.

: Yes.

: Yes.

: Within about a stonéés throw of our house.

: And then the rest of it was shot out here where goes through the old hills.

: Yes.

: But they had a party one night that, boy, I tell you, talk about, you know, imported liquors and all that stuff. They really . . . They had been shooting down here in the desert in the summertime. And they really blew it out their ear. You remember (laughter) God, does that go back. Oh, boy. is a motion picture which made a distinction of being in a book called The One Hundred Worst Motion Pictures of All Time. And I did some of the music for that as a result of my association with a young guy who graduated a year after I did from Coachella Valley High School named Archie Hall,

at that time junior. And Arch and I became friends, and he was playing guitar and I knew some things on the guitar that he didn't know and showed him. He went on to pass me up on the guitar and we eventually worked together as a result of this on a movie called "Wild Guitar," which even showed on Channel 7 six o'clock movie. And we put a band together, and that was the first band that I worked with up in the city, up in Los Angeles, when I first got started. I lived with him and his family in Burbank for awhile. And that all started down there.

: When were you there?

: But was shot down here.

: Yes.

: And it was a story of a giant who comes out of the desert and terrorizes everybody. And it was played by

: Richard Keel. He didn't really want to do it, and he didn't want to make the grunts so that Archie Hall's dad had to dub in the grunts. (laughter) Because the guy was so lazy. And this is the Shadow Mountain Club. This was still Richard Keel who is now rich and famous, and who did the thing with the steel teeth in that, the latest James Bond movie.

: Yes.

: And, oh, man, that was . . .

: I remember a story about that. The motion picture business or the things involved with, like Palm Village and Palm Desert, a lot of motion picturesstuff going on down here at that time. They did a lot of interiors down here. They'd come away for the, you know, get away for a weekend and shoot something at the club or whatever. And I remember once a deal that happened with this film, in observing it. Keel was dressed in, he was supposed to be a prehistoric man that had been woken from a deep sleep or whatever, and it took a brick and went over to Joe's Liquors to pick up some, you know, 7-Up or Pepsi or whatever. And there was some kids out hotrodding around. They got out late from Sun Air Drive-In. And it was a Volkswagen with a sun roof. And Keel is a, he's a big giant of a man, who is married to a little tiny drink of water lady.

: He was about seven-foot-two.

: He is, not his wife. His wife is a little tiny thing.

: Yes, I always had a lot of questions about that.

: Yes. Anyway, he was never very receptive to your questions, as I recall. (chuckle) Anyway, they were going over, and this is the Volkswagen sun roof. And

this kid pulls up behind, and he he's hot to get on with the program. Lot of coming traffic and waiting to turn. And so, kind of chuckles in the car, and he says, this will be a good one. And pulls back the sun roof, and he's still in this cave man outfit with these . . .

SIDE 4:

Corvette. This kid is sitting there, he's got his date, and he's just . . . sounds like we got him a bastard puppy. Makes a lot of noise like this kid is, kind of (laughter) Cracks that car clear down into, you know that of dirt.

: Yes.

: In Rancho Mirage there on Frontage Road. But a lot of, that was, you know, the motion picture related business that I got into, in doing films and television and all that, I saw more drinking and more use of shall we say controlled substances in that business than any others. I worked with a lot of fairly well known people. And I would say this, that the ones that were successful in the true sense of the words, avoided it, just flat stayed away from it. Got into drinking, yes, as a release of

pressure and whatever, but never into any drugs or anything like that. The only person that I remember that was a close friend of mine here in Palm Desert in those days and growing up and everything that we assumed got into drugs and died as a result of it. And kind of sad when you go to a guy's funeral, I mean, you went to school with him for years and years. I mean, I've got pictures from the third grade of art class and you know. And Rickey Patton and some of them have been here forever. And Joe Johnson. And you just, and then one day you catch them, for some reason you catch , and you never read the obituaries, but you'll catch names.

: Wasn't that weird, isn't that strange how you'll catch a name. Somebody that you've never see, haven't seen him for eight years. And there they are. And you think, or was or would have been.

: I've seen three in this past year and there they are in the obituary. Just boom, you can look at it.bect just jumped out.

: You don't have to for some reason. Something about that.

: Yes.

: If you could get advertising that would do that you could

make a fortune.

: Really.

: Stan, are you ~~l~~eaving us?

SL: I have to go.

: That's a shame. It's a loss. I'm sure you have a lot more up your sleeve. Are you hung up for the restoof the day?

SL: I'm hung up. I've got a meeting that I've got to get at. I'm involved in some marriage family counseling type things.

: Yes.

PY:

SL: Sh~~i~~rely.

PY: Obviously

: Not Shirley, that's Pat. I'm sorry.

PY: You obviously were away from the desert for awhile.

SL: Yes, I was away.

PY: Was it the desert that brought you back?

SL: No, I had a triplex apartment, and I came back to take care of it like a complete fool. And I just never left. (chuckle)

: Just can't find the time to leave.

SL: No, we, I went over to school in Spokane and back to the

Chicago area and, you know, other places. And then came back and started teaching. And then Carolyn and I moved to San Diego for a couple of years. And then we had some income property and wanted to come back to take care of it. And we just, you know, haven't gotten away since. But there's still hope, Ken, like you say. On my bedroom wall behind the door so that our parents can't see it, you know, we have a big map of San Diego and one of the Puget Sound areas. This time of year it's a tiresome place. I think, I cannot believe that a person who lives here during the summertime is not showing, I mean, I'm talking now doctoral business in psychology coming to the surface here, but I cannot but think that there is a great overt showing of rural serious masochistic

: I was waiting for you to get that out. (laughter)

: At least it's cool smog, you know.

: Yes.

: Eighty degrees.

: You rationalize it because then I think, well, I could live up in Puget Sound and it would rain six months of the year. And I've been through that.

: Yes.

:; But Ken and I, you and I both know so many people who live here and then go there and then move back.

: Just get a business to turn on and off six months out of the year, we'd have it knocked, you know. It just doesn't work that way.

: Oscar is now returning.

: Yes.

: He was my cohort in the band, The Renees.

: Right.

: Lived in San Diego, established a tenure teaching, and very good job.

: Now wanting to come back.

: Wanting to come back.

: He called me about a month ago to see if we had any openings, and we didn't. But I think he's go to

: Right.

: I talked to the personnel director down there and they're just chomping at the bit to get ahold of him because they know who he is and they know what his talents are. Fantastic musician.

: It's funny. As coming up as a kid, I used to go around to all the places and people always said, oh, you know, you always heard Palm Springs and everything else. And

I got to thinking that, okay, well now all these people, you know, are making all this money and everything, and they can go anywhere they want to. And they're building these houses down here and every year they build more houses and more people come down here. But it's people that can afford to come down here. Now I'm down here and I can afford to live here the way that I like to live. And I can enjoy this. And I just never wanted to leave. I just, raised in the heat, raised out playing in the sand dunes and stuff. And, sure, there's days when I say, no, I'll just stay inside. But if you do, you can survive.

: I've been to South Dakota and I've seen cold. And I've lived up in the northwest and I've seen wet. And I use the same rationalization every summer, that I get about three months down here that are a little bit tough. Sometime from the middle of June to the middle of September, and it varies back and forth. But if I go to South Dakota, I've got five months of below zero temperatures and howling winds.

: And it's awfully hard to build in that kind of climate.

: Everything blows away. And I've been up to Oregon and Washington. I was going to move up there at one point,

and we went up there and it rained fourteen inches in seven days. And when my fingers started to get webbed in between, I said, no. I'm going back home and dry them out. But you can use the same rationalization, this place is nice nine months of the year. And with air conditioning it's acceptable

: And that ain't a bad average compared to most of the country.

: And there's no way you can screen the water out.

: So it's big deal. (laughter)

AO: When I was small and my mother started teaching to keep food coming in because my dad had a stroke, actually several, she became very popular for teaching and bringing animals into the classroom. Kind of unorthodox way of teaching kids, and I was Mrs. O'Day's boy.

: Yes.

AO: Now that I've grown and time has passed and she's still teaching on a substitute basis, now in her seventies, and my big record happened, now she is Alan O'Day's mother. (laughter) The tie to my mother is a strong one, and her love of the desert translates into my love of the desert. And she lives in La Quinta. And this keeps me, between her and the feeling I have here, keeps

me coming back. So, although I don't live here, I own the house here that she lives in, and I feel like part of me is here.

: Yes.

AO: And I always make this trip, you know, coming down this great alluvial fan, you know, down into the Palm Springs dip there and the freeway now. And there's a homecoming feeling.

: Yes.

: It's strange, but you get that feeling you know you're coming home when that first blast of furnace hot air hits you. (laughter)

: It's coming in through the vents and you've got to close everything down and turn on the air conditioning. I'm home.

: I'm home. And the smell of the air and what's really great is after a, like a rainstorm or something down here, not so much now anymore, but used to when it rains really hard. The other day when we had that hard rain. You can smell the grease with stuff.

: Yes.

: Oh, it smells great. Ah, that's the desert.

PY: I wanted to cover a little more of, because it's important for understanding your relationship with the Mexican-American community, it was the minority (chuckle)

: No, it was Spanish-speaking.

: But I was like at that time, we were the minority. Maybe not in Palm Desert per se, but in Indio and stuff, certainly, because it, well, like in my own little protected bubble sphere, whatever, that I, system that I grew up in, my father was the ranch foreman. The people, for instance over here, the people that owned the ranch, of course, Bill Cook, he was a county supervisor here later on. But then other than that all of the adults that I associated with down there with braceros, up from Mexico working the dates. They were date tree men. And these were professionals. These men came up from, the people that I associated with, my father had some real workers, these guys were what they called tall tree men. And they worked these high date trees. You've got to climb about six times, seven times a year to get a good crop, each one of those trees, and these guys are used to working off the top of a fifty-five foot ladder in these palm trees taking care

of them, dethorning them. And so these guys were more or less, I would go out there and take boxes out to them, make sure that the boxes were set up while they're picking and stuff because they didn't have the automatic shaker-pickers in those days. They were picking them all by hand still. And originally they were picking them two and three times a season because you would only pick the grade A quality dates. You were going for quality because the price was so low you couldn't afford to be in the C grade of dates.

: You'd have much higher quality dates then than you do now.

: Much higher. I mean they didn't just take a bunch down when most of them were ripe and shake that sucker out and throw away what wasn't ready and go with what they got. And these people in the evenings and stuff when they were cleaning up and cooking and stuff, I'd go in there and they taught me how to make tortillas from flour and lard and, you know, where's Kenny? Oh, he's down with the braceros, you know, cooking tortillas and eating beans and having a great time down there. And still I couldn't speak any Spanish. They didn't speak English. And had a great time, and there were

some really tremendous characters down there.

: We had the wetbacks that didn't make the bracero program.

: We had a couple of those, too.

: There were a lot of wetbacks that came in, and we used to use those. And they stayed out in the tamarisk trees where I had my fort. And they'd come in and work the date trees doing the work that the Whites wouldn't do.

: Yes.

: And they'd come in and do that, and I can remember growing up with them. Same thing, getting the Mexican culture directly. And I don't think I ever knew there was a difference. I really don't think there was in my mind any difference between peoples.

: No, I mean, I didn't, like I said, I couldn't speak to them, but we got along great, you know. And they had a lot of fun with me, I'm sure, kidding me thinking I was just the foreman's kid. And my dad got along great with them. He always had the same group of men year after year after year always came back and worked for my father. And still do, up until he quit doing his own work and quit subcontracting his own work. And every year he had the same group, and some of those guys

they would walk out and just get ahold of a fifty-five foot ladder and these last few years with a five-foot extension on the end of it because a fifty-five foot ladder you can set on the ground and shake it up in the limbs and it won't reach. And just pick it up and walk over and set that deal up against the tree and they're right up it. And do that all day long. That is, and then, but they'll do that for about a month and then bamb they're back down to Mexico. And they've got a little rancho down there, and down there they're the patron. And they take it easy, and they come up here and they make the big bucks and then they shoo on back down there. And these guys, they were sharp.

: We had a big Mexican or that background community in Indio at the time we were going to school down there. Like everyone said, we all went to school together. But there were two distinct communities. And Alan used to move in and out of the community. I didn't move in and out of them that much.

: Yes, I know you didn't.

: But I had a lot of friends that were.

: Yes.

: And there was no question about the fact that there is

a difference, complete different lifestyle. The two communities were living very peacefully, slightly intermixed, I would say, or moderately intermixed.

: Moderately.

: Moderately intermixed, getting along fine.

: Certainly dating wise I think that there wasn't, there were, nobody was saying, don't date this group or don't date that group.

: That's right.

: Or you don't go with her or you don't go with him or any of that.

: I think you had bigger groups within the Mexican community.

: Probably had bigger factions.

: A different agreement.

: If we had an actual fight, then you had, again the Whites were on the outer rim.

: Like I say, I don't think we even figured into it. (laughter)

: It wasn't really worth the hassle, you know.

: Yes. That's right.

PY: Were there any language problems? Did most of the kids speak English?

: Yes, there was a kind of a pigeon Spanish that sufficed for most of the communication. I don't, correct me if I'm wrong on this, but there wasn't a high degree of verbal communication intellectually between high school kids anyway. This was not a school where there was a lot of talking, discussing of issues going on anyway.

: No, no.

: It was just you went there.

: You went there and you did what the teacher gave you, period.

: Yes, you know you liked somebody from a smile or you got together and had lunch with them, you know, at the ham- burger

: Or a couple of guys would get going with wisecracks in the back of the class or something, messing around.

: I think the distinction came in the ability of the Mexican community to learn in the English-speaking schools. I think for the White community to understand what was going on, could learn from that situation. I think the thing that happened was that, although we could all communicate and we all spoke, basically spoke English for the most part, at least enough to get by, what finally happened and what probably gives you your

problems today and in the years past is that they weren't learning and growing at the same rate, and certainly not in the same direction in a lot of cases. And so that you'd begin to see more of a discrepancy between the community as it gets older and older.

: Yes, but I saw the discrepancy between families per se because like I said my example is my friend Frank Lopez and his family. His father speaks some English. His mother none, as far as I know really, because I always had to have one of his sisters translate for me. But that was your end.

: No.

: The whole family, all the kids, speak better English than I do. I know his sister Alice does because she worked for Tom Anderson, the lawyer, for several years. (chuckle) In his front office as a receptionist and his phone and everything. And then I don't know what his sister Diane was doing, but she was excellent in school, very high standards.

: Were they an exception, though?

: They might have been, but why, why would they be an exception? Why would they do something, because at home they spoke Spanish because that's what, they always

spoke Spanish at home. And I would get lost so Frank or somebody would turn around and translate for me what was going on because I was a dummy, you know.

: I kind of picked up on some of the Spanish as a result of my association with the Mexicans. I was very comfortable in that kind of culture because what determined the likes and dislikes of the whole group was not anything having to do with color. It was the fact we were all kind of poor and trying to survive and, you know, just occupy with day to day life. I don't think we had time to sit and stew about differences or, you know, or get into long analyses of ourselves.

: Right, right.

: We just, you know, it was hot as hell when it was hot and everybody was more or less in the same boat.

: And everybody was uncomfortable.

: Economically, physically, everything else. Everybody was in the same little boat.

: I spent a lot of time, you talk about your friend Frank, I spent a lot of time out at Oscar 's house, his father, is a farmer and they have a large, what seems to me to be a large farm out there in the Thermal area. And when The Renees would rehearse,

half the time we'd rehearse at my house and half the time we'd drive out there to Thermal and rehearse when they had a piano. And there was first-hand contact, you know, with this, supposedly it's supposed to be such a big thing, cultural differences. And it would be like any farm-type situation community. There was, you know, if you needed a bite to eat or something or if you wanted a cold drink, and there's a lot of kids, you know, around. And everybody was listening to the music and urging you on. And I learned a lot about relating to people in that kind of situation because being an only child I hadn't gotten some of the things that happened actually to other kids fighting with their sisters and brothers and stuff. And I grew up a lot in my relationship with the members of the band and, you know, the families involved. There were, you know, there were certain, you know, it sounds like living at Disneyland or something. There were problems. There were certainly bad guys that would, you know, cause troubles and everything. And not everybody liked me, and I didn't like everybody. But generally speaking, everybody got along. People weren't out looking for trouble because basically you were just getting through the summer and getting through

the winter and going to school. And I was very involved in making music, and anybody else that liked music, fine. That was something to talk about and that was the main thing.

: There was a common ground.

: Yes, that's, but like you say, you still, you had your basic, whatever it is required quota of hard cases, bullies, whatever. But they didn't fall into any set group as far as Black, White, Mexican, whatever. It was just there are hard cases that are around.

: was always a hard case.

: Well, that was an outside, that's where it split. It had nothing to do with cultures. Just that that was the other high school in the end of the valley. And if you were going to have a hassle, it was them against CV at that point. And there were some pretty good hassles and knife fights. Times like that, but that's when you had a lot of your big hassles.

: The only ones I can, that's the only fights I can remember.

: Yes.

PY: Was there competition later between CV and Indio?

: Oh, yes. (laughter)

: Yes, there were the standard spray paint jobs on the side of the gym and that sort of thing when I was there. That was about as ferocious as it got.

: Were you with us when we planted the sixty in grass and rock at CV? We used to cruise. As a senior in high school, I had a 1952 Buick with continental kit white red leather upholstery, neat car for a high school kid. And it was my dad's, but I got to drive it.

: Any car was the neatest car.

: That says a lot right there.

: My mom's forty-nine Chevy was a real neat car. (laughter)

: We used to cruise in that in the evenings and there were four or five of us. Green, Bob Green, who's now a fireman in Indio, and two or three other people that I can think of. I can't remember who they were, but there were four or five of us in the car. We used to pull pranks like with graduation night we went in, they had something going on in the auditorium. We climbed over the roof, opened up the school, hauled bags of rock in, dug a sixty out of the grass, and planted it in rock.

: A sixty?

: Our graduating year, 1960.

: They couldn't carry enough rock to say 1960, so all we did was put the sixty in.

: Good clean fun. Closed it up, took all our trash with us and went back. And when they got there the next day, there it was.

: We had a rock garden.

: We had a rock garden. Of course, it was illegal. They would have told us no. We did a lot of things like that.

AO: During my pre-Renee days, this was like a sophomore in high school, when I was playing informally with various of the kids in school who played instruments, I remember Mr. McSwan, the principal, God rest his soul. He passed away, I think, one or two days after the twenty-year class reunion. He stopped me in the hall and expressed his concern about my hair style and told me that he was concerned that I was hanging around with the wrong type of people. To this day, I don't exactly understand what he meant. I think some of the guys that could play instruments were some of the bad ass guys. And maybe that's what he meant. And maybe, I don't know, I don't know if he meant some of the Mexican kids or not. I still can't figure it out. But he looked at my hair style and came to the conclusion.

: You're going down the wrong road.

: Going down the wrong road, you know. And then we had

career day when I was a senior.

: Oh, yes.

: And you'd pick what you wanted to do and you'd go to a room. If you wanted to be in construction, I guess you'd go talk to a contractor or something like that. For me, if you wanted to go to music, you went to this certain room. So I went to this certain room and this guy who was in music or something stood up in front of us and he said, don't do it. (chuckle) (laughter) He said you can't make any money at it, it's horrible. You know, it's very, you can't count on it.

: I can just barely support my drug problem. (laughter)

: This was a standard straight ahead 1950s grownup. Musician. (laughter) But, you know, he said, don't do it. Which is really encouragement for a guy trying to get into music in high school.

: Yes. I had no encouragement. There wasn't, now, you know, you can take courses in song writing in Los Angeles. You can take courses in recording studio work. There wasn't any dreams or anything like that going on, especially down here. So I had to forge my own world and just out of love of it and, you know, there weren't any guidelines to go by. And I was self taught musically. And didn't

learn to read music ever, which probably held me back. But it's like learning to type, you do it your own way. And that's it. But he said, don't do it, and so, you know, my mother wanted me to be a teacher. And then ten years later all the teachers were out of work, and I was a musician in a night club. (laughter)

: And you were working and they weren't.

AO: I was working and they weren't. (laughter) Times do change.

: But it's full circle.

PY: Was there that everyone was sort of involved with agriculture one way or another, was there total exposure in ranches and farms?

: That was me. My dad had been, as I said, a photographer and a publicity man. And then he had this stroke which paralyzed him on one side, and he was completely out of the picture as far as supporting the family was concerned. He was a semi-invalid living at home. Occasionally he'd take his car and go over to Dave's place in Coachella and have a few drinks and come back. And I'd always worry whether he'd make it or not. My mother was supporting the whole family, just eking along. She taught school in Thermal, and I think in Coachella for awhile.

And she even picked okra once during the summer, and my dad drove the ice cream truck, the Foster Freeze Ice Cream truck, for awhile. So we just did whatever we could to get by. And my relationship to the land was only through, indirectly through the eyes of the other kids. Like Oscar with his farm and everything like that. I just saw the palm trees and everything, and I didn't realize the relationship of the industries that go on down here to everything else. I never figured that out until later.

: My father in 1939, he was working in a cotton gin in West Texas doing cotton, and he took time off to drive my grandfather and my mother out here to visit some relatives from Long Beach. And they drove to this valley, and they stopped at a motel that was down in Indio at the time. And my father got up early the next morning and he had noticed, coming through, he noticed there was cotton gin down off of fifty-six at that time. It would still be there. And he noticed there was a cotton gin there. He had seen the cotton fields. So he went out poking around and found a job and stayed. And he's been here since thirty-nine.

: We didn't have that same connection with the agricultural

system. We moved down here with my parents, were separating at the time, or it was in the process. And it happened shortly after we moved down here. But Dad was down here because the construction industry in Santa Monica was closing up. And the land had been used. And there were lots available, but not that many. A contractor has to be a growing community. And this was a growing community. And that's the reason we were here. And we lived on a ranch and we were exposed to the agricultural thing. We had five acres of dates and five acres of tangarines over in the Bob Hope area. And later in my last year in high school I lived out in North Indio on a twenty-five acre citrus ranch because it was fun and it was a good place to raise kids. But the primary interest was not in agriculture for the most part. It was out of the construction industry.

: My dad was just amazed at that time, especially coming up from West Texas, at the variety of crops that were growing all in this one little valley, and the irrigation system and everything. And he started working, he ended up working for a Mr. Peck, the Peck Ranch, out on Avenue 56. And Mr. Peck was a chemical engineer. And that's where my dad got his knowledge of fertilizers and insecticides

and everything from this chemical engineer that was involved with work and was being done up in Berkeley at the time in developing the new pesticides and stuff. And stuff with corn bore, and things like that. And that's where he got his original information on using, they were even using, they were using tear gas, for what they called the lesser corn bore and it was killing . . . That was the only thing they could get that would penetrate enough and kill a corn bore and not bother the corn. And it was, working from that, he just, that was mostly vegetable crops and crops and some dates and citrus. And then he got into dates and citrus a little more heavily. And the old farm bureau organization that they had in the valley here was the one that got together and brought Carl to the valley to do the weather forecast and stuff for the agricultural section of the valley.

: Were they the first co-op?

: I don't know. My father was just relating tales that they did, they had a farm bureau. And they also sent some representatives to Europe to investigate the possibility of different crops could be started here. And he said the man came back with the terrific idea that

they start commercially growing sunflowers. And they said that was fine except that my dad had tried in the year before, and the problem was transporting them. By the time you transport them, the only place, I think in Brawley they had a place that did separate them and everything and process them. And by the time you got them down there, there was your profit.

: We tried coffee one year, and it just wouldn't, the plant would grow, but it wouldn't produce commercially. They've tried just about everything down here, I think. You're looking at your list of additional . . .

SIDE 5:

: Ken mentioned the canal system and all. The agriculture was supported by it down here and it also supported the pastime, the sport of water skiing. You get a nice long rope, and there was always a dike that runs along the canal and you can drive a car along it. That's how they maintained the canal system. And so we'd get an old beat up pair of water skiis and it was the only real water available. It was a little dangerous because it was narrow and every time you'd run across one of the boxes or something like that, it'll stick you but you could

water ski along behind the car in the canal. It was kind of fun. I wouldn't suggest it today.

: No. It's a whole different ball of wax today.

PY: Obviously we've talked about a lot of the things that you did among yourselves. Are there others that we haven't talked about?

: Hunting and fishing. There's some big catfish came out of the canal.

: Yes, we used to fish the canal. We used to go up to the old trout farm. That's been here for a long time at White Water, and do that. I was into scouting. I spent a lot of time doing that with Ken's father. We hiked all over the mountains in Cotton Palm Canyon one time.

: Yes. Had to go down the wrong canyon.

: Yes.

: Couldn't get up because we had come down over some dry waterfalls enough to the point where we couldn't get back up the canyon. And we couldn't go down, so we finally hiked out over a saddle. It was kind of fun, but there was a lot of that. I swam. That took up an awful lot of my time.

: When you stop and think about it, that was one heck of a scouting troop we had back in those days. I mean, once

a month they went out on an overnight camping trip. That was not a bad average.

: I ended up going to Europe in fifty-seven to the World Jamboree, which was the hundredth anniversary of Baden-Powell, the founder of scouting,because of the background I had in the troop. And that probably along with living in this community changed my attitude more than anything else because I was exposed to all kinds of different people and cultures. People that said, you Americans are fine in certain ways, but we sure live a lot differently. And they didn't have any qualms about saying it. That they thought we were nuts for giving people millions of dollars, and they couldn't understand why we didn't believe in our own selves, our own way of life. And I remember a lot of different cultures from that. And like I say, from living in this community.

: I think my personal peak moment in scouting was, I think when I was in the sixth grade, and we had the San Jacinto trek. And Frank Lopez and I, getting ready for this, we would get our packs on and we would walk into Indio and back. In the wash. From right here, right here, walk down in the wash right back in these date groves right here, walk to Indio down where the miles dip and stuff.

And the first couple of times we used to go one way, and my mother would pick us up and bring us back. You know, Mom, we're going to do down. Okay, well, she'd go into Indio and do some shopping or something and she'd pick us up and bring us back. And then we'd try it both ways. But getting ready for that, and I did make it up to the summit of Mount San Jacinto. And at that time they said I was the smallest person that had made, I mean, backpacking up there that they knew of. And signed the book. My name's up there somewhere. And I blew away probably.

: I liked Rio Del Sol when it went out on Thousand Palms, it still does but that was my hiking merit badge. And we went to summer camp.

: Yes, Emerson.

: At Camp Emerson.

: That was fun.

PY: Which was where?

: Which is up near Idyllwild.

: It's in Idyllwild. It's still there.

: Yes, it's in Idyllwild now.

: Yes, it used to be in the edges, now it's in.

: My interests were a lot physical. I remember in my

junior year at high school, Stan Little approached me and he had this job at KCHV which he could no longer do, and he was convinced that I could do it. So I decided to try it, and I became a disc jockey at one of the local radio stations on weekends. And at that station there was a guy who ran the Mexican show, the early morning show, and his name was Hilberto Enriques. And Hilberto talked to me, he wanted to take a vacation, and he asked if I would do his show. I said, well, I don't speak much Spanish. He said, well, I will make tapes of all my commercials, and you'll play the tapes in between the records. So besides doing my little rock and roll type show on Saturday and a Sunday afternoon show where I played easy listening music, I would sometimes for a dollar an hour get up at four thirty in the morning and go out to this little round box of a radio station that was about half the size of a normal house and unlock the door and go in and push a series of buttons which would turn on the powerful transmitters, fifty thousand watt transmitters, wait five minutes, turn on the board, play the National Anthem, and play this scratchy 78 rpm record that was the theme song for Hilberto Enriques. Open the microphone and say, Buenos dias

Alan O'Day.

(laughter)

which was the name of the program. And strange things would happen to me out at that radio station. (laughter) At this hour in the morning. (laughter) Oh, especially when I'd get phone calls from people who were convinced that Hilberto was there because they could hear him talking on the tape.

They were talking Spanish so fast that I couldn't begin to understand it. And I would say,

Hilberto, este Alan O'Day. (laughter) Sorry about that. And sometimes they would mention some musical artists that I could find in the file of his records. And so I played a lot of the Mexican music. When songs are popular in Mexico, they're popular not just for the kids or the adults or everybody. There's not a big generation gap so that I was getting listeners of all ages responding to some of the popular records that he had of Lola

which is an instrumental group. They play harp music. And I would then go home and go back to sleep after the show was over at eight o'clock. And with this music ringing in my head. And it was a delightful experience to go out and do that show except sometimes when I had to play with The Renees on a Saturday night and do the

show on a Sunday morning.

: Oh, boy!

AO: And, you know, with about three hours sleep, drive out there. And once I was late. And once I had to use the bathroom, and the record ran out. (laughter) Or stuck or something. And that is a weird feeling.

: Yes. And you'd go

AO: Stuck, I'll tell you. (laughter) Because I was the only one out there. It was called combo work, where you'd not only play the records, but you run the board and all the things. So I was the only one out there. And that was quite an experience, getting out to that station at odd hours and being out there, and yet in touch with so many people.

PY: You were talking earlier, you and Stan, about the wheezers.

AO: The wheezers. That's Stan's term, yes.

PY: Those who had asthma or other respiratory illnesses.

AO: No, just as opposed to your standard

You know, like I started to get into the Boy Scouts. I got through the Cub Scouts. I remember I couldn't hurdle the fence, and that was about where I stopped in my list of things to do.

PY: Were there a lot of kids around here though that did have,

were here, because they had asthma or other respiratory problems?

AO: There probably were, but to me it seemed like I was the only one.

: Or your parents. Another friend of mine, his father was down here. He was a successful meat cutter up in the Newport Beach area, developed emphysema.

: Yes.

: So he was down here for that.

: Yes. This area attracts a lot of people. With the smog they have now, it becomes a wonder to me . . .

: I'm talking about in those days.

: Yes.

: We didn't have any smog then.

: When is the first time you noticed smog here, in the sixties?

: I think the late sixties.

: Yes, mid to late sixties.

: I kept noticing it.

: You could see it in the afternoons. You still can.

: Physically, too. It's a healthier climate than Pacific Palisades and Santa Monica was.

: But I was convinced I was the only one that was, you know,

having this kind of trouble.

: You mean we were both going through school at the same time? (laughter) We both felt the same way.

AO: We both were the only ones, yes. Us and I'm sure a lot of others.

: Well, yes, but I didn't, like you say, just part of the athletics and stuff in school. I went out for one thing. I went out for, I thought cross-country running. We were going to get a cross-country track team. And I was going to be a distance runner because I really liked just getting out there and going through the date orchards and across the hills. Loved it, loved to run.

: That's great.

: I only found that kind of stuff recently, the joy of that kind of stuff, but in high school

: I went out for that and in two weeks I had a pair of ingrown toenails you could not believe. And I never ran a single meet. That was it.

: That's funny.

: I lettered. And they finally decided they were going to give academic letters in high school. Okay? Well, the big awards ceremony everybody's crowded into the gym. They're going to announce everything. And they call my

name and they gave me a letter in chemistry and in English, double letter. So all of my good buddies are up in the top booing and hissing, you know, the standard thing, you know. Well, I was home with the flu, and these guys I found out years later were out there booing and hissing and, you know, and they start looking around. And they figured that their booing and hissing, that I was so withdrawn anyway, that I probably just kind of snuck out of the gym. And they started genuinely feeling bad because they thought they really blew my big moment. The only thing that I did that, you know, call him up in front of everybody, and we were up here booing. And the poor guy is so embarrassed that he's just not even going to show. And I was home with the flu.

PY: You know one of the things we started talking about earlier was a typical day. I think we got as far as the car and that was it.

: Oh, my typical day would be getting up with my mother who had to drive out to Thermal to teach school at about seven thirty, not at all willingly. If I didn't wake up right away, she started slamming doors as she went through the house. (chuckle) And that was a pleasant way of waking up. My dad would remain sleeping probably

until two or three in the afternoon because he, his lifestyle had become so sedentary due to his illness that he didn't get to sleep until four or five in the morning. I'd get up and fix myself some cereal to eat and maybe make some bacon and eggs if there was time. Jump in the car; if I got a chance to take the car to school, it was really a big day. Most of the time I had to be at the bus stop. At the bus stop in my sophomore year was the first time I saw a girl without makeup. Well, that was a shock. That took a year to recover from. This girl, one of the girls was late for the bus and she hadn't had time to put on her makeup, you know. God, they're kind of like guys. (laughter) That was really a shock, you know. So you can see I had a very sheltered existence. (laughter) But riding to school on the bus and talking to everybody and finding out what you did the night before, what program you watched on TV or if anybody got their homework done. And then getting to school and dragging yourself to first class. I liked it when my first class was study hall. That would give me a chance to kind of look at magazines.

: Get up for the rest of the day.

: I just, I'm sorry, I just never ever got comfortable with the academic thing. And I am still to this day, so happy that I don't have to do homework. (laughter) Just not having to do homework anymore makes me feel wonderful. But . . .

: Oh, you and me both.

PY: Good thing you didn't subject yourself to college then after that.

AO: Yes, yes. Three years to get my AA, it's a two-year degree. It took me three years.

: It took me three and a half because I had a . . .

AO: I took Spanish I three times.

: And that's not even including the Air Force in the middle of it. In other words, if you'd include that it's seven and a half.

: Yes. Glad you mentioned that because we all went through a draft thing. Oh, I got signed up. And what I, I went to a certain doctor and I'm going to leave him nameless who wrote me a letter that made my asthma appear much worse than it was. It said, don't you dare go into the service. And when they tell you to come in, you bring this letter from me stating that you have severe asthma and carry a respirator with you. I mean, he really built it up. And as a result, I didn't go into the service.

: Wish I'd known him.

: Yes, well.

: You did.

: We were both in the Air Force. I refused to be drafted.

: Yes.

: Couldn't get enough money to go to Canada, so I . . .

: Yes.

: It was funny. They called, you know, report for your pre-induction physical. So there's a whole busload of us clowns from this area. They're going to bus us up to L. A.

: Yes, I remember that.

: All right. So we meet down at the Greyhound Bus Station and everybody, you know, I mean even the hard cases and the guys that really think they're rough, they're down there chewing their fingernails.

: It's scary!

: And they're looking sick. Now they've been up the night before, and they got a hangover. They're really going to look their best for this physical. Well, we go up there and the bus pulls up in front of the building up there and the doors open. And the first two guys off the bus, because they knew they weren't going to go, were Bill

Ferguson, who is about six foot seven, and at that time weighed, he had eaten himself up to about three hundred pounds. Okay. I mean . . .

: For this purpose?

: Yes.

: So he wouldn't be drafted.

: Right. And the other guy, I mean, he's already tall. He's usually around, I don't know what Bill was normally, but he had really gone on a crash program to gain weight, and so he knew he was going to be too big. And the other guy's name was William and this little guy was about, I don't know, three foot something or four even or just under four, real little thin frail looking guy. These are the first two guys off the bus because they know they're not going to be taken. And they come busting through the door, and the rest of us clowns are behind them. And the sergeants . . .

: We arrived up to the national center.

: Yes, right up, you know, they've got the little lines going up to the sergeant's desk and they're going to split you up and alphabetized and all this. And they go running through the door and the sergeant is sitting up there with his number five Marine look on, you know.

: Yes.

: And these two guys, you know, and come through the front door, and he just was He just broke up, and that was it. I mean, we just kind of deteriorated from there.

: Yes.

: That was so funny. That was something going through that.

: The process has no dignity whatsoever. I went through my physical and all that stuff because the county board down here, the draft board, said, we're going to take you. I already had my date for OTS in Officer Training School in the Air Force. And they said, we don't care.

: All right, kid, we've got a quota to make, fella, and you're it.

: That's right.

: Yes, so I joined the Air Force, air farce, three months early, went through basic training.

: Yes.

: You guys didn't. This was way before Vietnam, so you didn't see any action.

: This was in sixty-five, so it was just before Vietnam was heating up.

: Yes.

: See I was in there in sixty-nine, seventy.

: I was getting out in sixty-nine.

: Kennedy was president during that era. Remember? When was he assassinated? Sixty-two?

: Sixty-three, I believe.

: Sixty-three. Kennedy?

: Yes, I remember where I was. I was . . .

: I was in a history class.

: University of Redlands campus.

: I was in a history class at Indio High School, and they piped it in over the, all of a sudden the loudspeakers came on and we're listening to kind of a radio commentary. You know, right in the middle, after they found out what happened, and as soon as they could get it hooked up and plugged in.

: Yes.

: And people are, you know, what are they doing? And then it started to unfold, you know. And then everybody's kind of wandered out. But the impact really didn't hit me.

: Yes, right.

: You know, I really didn't know, I mean, the teachers and

stuff, it hit them what was going on. But we'd go out there, you know, and we'd sit in the tree and we were shooting the bull, you know. Okay, you know, well, you got . . .

: Yes.

: But there was no real until I was up into college really.

: Yes.

: To be perfectly honest.

: I can tell you where I was almost within a foot of when I heard. And it came out over the loudspeaker.

: Yes.

: And it was quite a shock.

: Yes, I was asleep, and I was up in Burbank. And we'd been playing. We had a gig, and we got home real late. And Archie Hall's mother knocked on our door and said, "President Kennedy's been shot." And I kind of pulled myself out of bed. I said, "Oh, God!" And I went back to sleep again because I hadn't really woken up. And later she said, "This is awful. They think he's going to die!" And I woke up and I started turning the radio, and I had a little tape recorder and I set it by the radio as I just got up and they said, the President is shot, so I'm going to just listen to some stations and

record it. And I turned to some stations and every station was talking about it, even the Spanish and all that, you know. And I still have that tape somewhere of all these stations, you know, talking about it. And the impact was so tremendous. I remember driving down the freeway, looking at people's faces in their cars, you know, and everybody was just like so sad and everything. And all the sports were cancelled and everything.

: Yes.

: Kennedy's assassinated. And that was the beginning of the end of how it felt to be down here in the valley for me, you know, the political, the way things were politically. Kennedy was kind of a father figure. We felt like America one and all, everything was going to be okay, you know.

: Yes.

: And then it all just deteriorated. And still has. It's never, I don't think we've ever recovered.

: I think the feeling about down here changed for me when I was a kid still going to the Shadow Mountain Club and stuff. It had always been to me this, the ranches and go up to the Shadow Mountain Club on your bicycle and all your buddies were up there. Everybody met up there

and swam. And that's just where we lived during, especially in the summertime, and then back down. And I remember one day they had an aircraft accident in midair over Palm Desert. Now that's really crowded air space, right. They had two private planes hit. I mean and like they came down, one down off of Portola, I guess, and the other one up . . .

: If it's the same one I'm thinking of, I was living up on Old Prospector Trail.

: Yes.

: And it hit just behind the house, and it was just like a clap of thunder, and they picked, one guy landed at the Old Desert Air. And . . .

: He landed?

:Yes. He landed and he died after he landed. But he got the plane in.

: Oh.

: And the twin went down, I think it was a twin went down in the very, very lower extremity of Deep Canyon behind us. And we found parts of it scattered from there across our house down to below our house.

: To me that just kind of said, you know, well, this used to be, I don't know, just the very outreaches of

civilization and how now we've got airplanes falling out of the sky.

PY: Was that in the sixties?

: No, that was in the late fifties, I think.

: Yes.

: It would be fifty-seven or eight or thereabouts, yes. Fifty-seven or eight.

: I was going to say, Desert Air was a neat place. We used to fly all the VIP's in there. I can remember an air accident there where a guy didn't make the runway and it actually ended up in the wash, which runs right by it. And I can remember flying out of Desert Air in an old blanket with a guy by the name of Ersel Ostler who was a painter that dad had brought down from Santa Monica.

: Oh, yes.

: And we used to go down to Mexico.

: Ersel's

: And the radio hung down, and he'd tinker with the radio, and there was no gas cap on one side. (laughter) And that's what got me interested in flying.

: Yes.

: And finally ended up instructing and all that kind of thing.

: You know, it's funny because like now just some kids that I went to school with, the Lankins, we were talking about things to do down here, now they both got into flying, even their mother. They all took lessons and I guess his mother and his older brother got their pilot's licenses. And I was always hanging around with them at that time, and I'd go along for the ride. I've got some great rides out of the whole thing. And I remember, I think it was in the early sixties, they used to have the AOPA Plantation Party Fly-ins over at Palm Springs Airport. And they had one over Bermuda Dunes, and where pilots from all over the country would fly into this meeting, and they would have this place set up with all the different aircraft manufacturers and everything. And you could see all the latest personal aircraft, and they had an old Ford trimotor they used to bring down. You could get a ride on that for five bucks or something. They'd take sight-seeing trips on an old Ford trimotor around. And they used to have Bird's PBY. They'd have it open for inspection and people could go through that and see all the stuff he had in that. And they'd have a jet show and they had, one of the first, the first time we ever

saw a Leer jet. They had the grandstands set up and they brought that sucker right down the runway and they just pulled it straight up and went clear out of sight. Just straight up. And they said, that's the first jet, you know. It would outfly most of the World War II fighter planes, all of them actually. Yes. And some of the Korean War fighter planes. But it was a lot of fun just to, but they were getting into aviation. I mean, down here in Desert Air, I mean, was right there in the little Cessna 180's and 172's and stuff that were there.

: This little grass strip, just where the golf course is now. And it was an old grass strip. It was a pretty good little strip.

: It ran from just about the White Sun Ranch back that way, right up the road.

: Yes.

: And they used to moor the Goodyear blimp down there when they had it down in the area. They'd bring it down, they'd moor it right off the end of the grass strip there, up to the side.

: It's like it was two hundred years ago when the circus came to town when something like that happened. It was

neat down here. And everybody got into it. I mean you'd see everybody there. And the Frontier Days that they used to have here. And they'd clean out the parking lots back there. And they'd set up the grandstands and give away door prizes and have a barbecue up at Shadow Mountain Club. They used to have those steak fries and stuff up in the summertime. They'd have a carnival.

: Do you remember the stables that was at Shadow Mountain? You probably wouldn't, weren't involved in that. But they had a stables, the old Shadow Mountain Stables up there. And I can remember that was a big thing. You'd go blow up. You didn't do a lot of things like that. Mostly I collected eggs and picked date thorns out of my feet and swam and rode stickers.

: Running in the stickers.

: Running in the stickers.

: Oh, those were bad! And you swam in a hole in the ground that was ten feet by ten feet and about five feet deep. (phone rings)

PY: This was when you were out on the . . .

: On the ranch. Nine, ten, eleven years old.

: What did Foster say?

PY: That's a great way to end.

AO: I remember when I lived in Palm Springs, which was a very happy place for me, and I hated to move from Palm Springs to Indio when we had to move. But it was due to economics. My mother was teaching in Thermal and for awhile she was making the trip from Palm Springs to Thermal every day.

: (Whistle)

AO: To teach. But I used to take hikes into the sand dunes around Palm Springs. Sometimes we'd hike out to the sewer place and walk. We'd go walking through the large dry sea bed areas of flaky material which was processed sewage.

: Yes.

: Thank you for that nice word. (laughter)

AO: Notice how I got you to say that? (laughter)

: Yes. There's no nice way to say it; that's what it were.

AO: I don't want it to go down through history, you know. Alan O'Day was sitting here and said shit. (laughter) The Historical Society preserved it. (laughter)

: Guess what, Alan? (laughter)

: Anyway, somewhere in that area out by an old laundromat out there was a frame of a plane that crashed there many, many years, even before that. And that was one of our

favorite treks, was to walk through the residential area and then out through the sand and out to this plane to see if we could find some little goody, had

: Last fifteen years. Yes. Right.

: Take out there. And we did stuff like that and walked around. We'd throw, we'd have rock fights and we had, oh, peashooter, we had peashooter fights.

: Oh, yes.

: Little peas, and you'd buy the shooter and the peas.

: You'd get a bag of dry peas and you were all set.

: Yes.

: Yes.

: And we'd play in the sand behind the yard. And I remember the great caterpillar invasion of 1950 something or other.

: Yes.

: Oh.

:Drive down

: You could drive anywhere without squashing them.

: They were literally solid on Jefferson Street.

: The road looked like it was walking away.

: What year was that?

: In the highway.

: I couldn't tell you. My father probably could tell you

down to the month.

: Fifty-seven or fifty-eight.

: No.

: No.

: It's got to be before that because we were living in Palm Springs.

: Probably fifty-five, fifty-six.

: It had to be fifty-six because I was in high school and it was the first year in high school.

: Maybe it was more than one year.

: Yes.

: That's possible, but the caterpillars came out of the desert en masse. And they were so thick that you couldn't walk or drive a car without hitting them. Not just one. You walk, you'd walk on fifteen of them. They were literally solid.

: When the cars when down the road, they could (sound effects). And all of the . . .

: Try it again. (laughter)

: Motorcycles. (laughter)

: All of the ranchers and stuff down here, they were taking all their equipment and they were making trenches that had one sheer side and one tapered side was okay, but the

side next to the field had to be straight up and down. And you had to go along with a shovel and make sure the caterpillars hadn't broken it down to where they could get up. And you'd do that all the way around your field, and they'd go down through there and burn them with diesel. They'd put diesel in the trenches and burn them.

: Yes.

: Keep them off of the vegetables and stuff here in the valley because if they got into the vegetables, that was the end of the crop right there. And if the crop went, that was it.

: Yes.

: I had a hard time with stuff like that, the necessary, I suppose necessary, depending on whose scheme of things you look at, you know.

: Well, them or us type of thing in those days.

: Yes.

: Well, the person in your position was.

: Yes.

: Or any of the agricultural. And I remember my father down in the grapes. They had, you were talking about the birds and stuff, they had them so bad down there in

the grapes in the early fifties that they were putting out troughs of birdseed and then going back and putting in arsenic-laced birdseed and just wiping them. I mean, they would go through and just plow them under out there trying to save the grape crops. And the Department of Agriculture was furnishing, I believe was furnishing the poisoned birdseed to them.

: Stuff like that was very difficult, I mean, because of my personal background, my mother being a vegetarian since she was twelve. And we always tried to preserve any kind of life, and still do. You know, walk around ants on the street if you can and stuff like that. It gets carried away, you know. Every once in awhile you blow up and swat a fly. (laughter) But . . .

: You had to get it out of your system and all.

: Yes.

: Oh, I murdered a fly!

: But I remember the city of Indio sent a guy around with a shotgun that was shooting the pigeons in the palm trees.

: Shotgun in the palm trees.

: Yes.

: It was too much for me, you know, because here I had been intimately involved with particular animals that I

thought of as individuals.

: Yes.

: That were just as important in my life as a lot of the people were.

: Right.

: The dog and the bird I told you about, and you know, just various things that happened. We had a tame pack rat, and even now my mother has a tame raccoon.

: Yes.

: You know, that occupies one room of the house and has a doorway that goes out into her cage.

: Had to go around to the outside, yes. (chuckle)

: TV, her own TV. Black and white, though. We're not, you know, too silly.

: But if we could get her to get the Nielsen ratings.

: Yes, right.

: Just to see how it compares.

: Right.

: Yes, I know. Charlie's Cats or something. (laughter) Favorite show. Probably catches all the bears and stuff. (laughter) Really.

: No, growing up on the ranches, like I said, I guess, other than my dog that I, always had my dog, I had several dogs

over the years. But there was always the kid and the dog and the B-B gun.

: Yes.

: One of the greatest moments in my life was when I got a Daisy pump because that sucker had a lot of power. I could just right out of the top of a palm tree. It's pathetic. When you're a good enough shot to hit something, but it just looks at you, you know. And all down when I was just like seven or eight years old I was shooting a B-B gun almost constantly every day.

: Yes.

: And out in the grape vineyards and up in the date groves and stuff. My dad turned me loose with a B-B gun and I knew where not to shoot and what not direction to shoot, you know, I couldn't shoot in certain directions because there was houses over there.

: Yes.

: And I grew up with a B-B gun.

PY: Was that typical?

: What?

PY: Was that typical?

: Oh, well, for myself and my friends, Frank Lopez, Larry we'd all get down on the ranches there and, to

this day whenever Larry comes down, we pull out a pellet gun or B-B gun and take a stroll down through the ranches and shoot sparrows and finches and stuff.

: It's typical for anyone that lives in the out of doors, I think. I had the same thing. One thing we used to do that wasn't guns, we used to go out and we'd get sidewinders would move into the area. And those we did kill with quite a lot of consistency.

: Yes.

: Meanwhile.

: And you'd have to hunt them when you'd see the tracks.

: Yes.

: Meanwhile, while this was going on, my tame sparrow got sick and Dr. Tinkum, the noted who lives here, came and gave it antibiotics every two hours.

: Oh, my gosh! Oh, no.

: And saved its life.

: Okay, well, now I should put one footnote in here. At a very early age when my father explained to me that there are several kinds of animals that I'm going to run into out there in the date groves . . .

SIDE 6:

: And there are those which are crop-damaging animals such as the sparrows and stuff that we had out there. And he said, you can shoot all the sparrows, finches that you want to. He said, with that B-B gun. He says, you're not hungry. He says, there's no reason for you to shoot a quail or a dove or a pigeon. No squirrels, rats, rodents of any kind. I was limited to sparrows basically. That's what I was allowed, free license on sparrows and any lizard I could find, which would get the date crop and stuff. And a mockingbird was strictly off limits. But anything that was considered a pest to a farmer, I could just shoot at it all I wanted to. The more the merrier. Rattlesnake if I ever found one, fine. If I thought I was big enough to go in there and kill it, fine.

: Yes.

: Well, collision of moral values was what this was about. But I think the significant thing is that in the midst of an area like this where there is one set of values by the fact that people had to raise agriculture and compete with the animals that are thought of as pests. There was also some movement among other people who

wanted to, you know, who were against the dove hunting that went on. That was a nightmare. My father and all of us felt this way.

: Yes.

: They hunted the area.

: The yearly . . . in of these idiots who would come and shoot at everything including each other, and it would just spoil the whole valley area. That's one reason why my property and where my mother lives is in La Quinta now which is a game refuge so there's some sanity hopefully that stays in this kind of area. So along with shooting, unfortunately, and this is really not a place to expound on my own personal beliefs, but there's a very narrow, a line between people who have, you know, a set thing of what they'll shoot at and other people who don't shoot anything . . . shouldn't be classified as sportsmen in the first place who come down here and make the place an unsafe place to live. And that's one of the big industries that supports this valley, and I think that's really sad.

: Yes.

: My father, I think, the most angered I ever saw him was at a time when somebody drove their car right down in

middle of the date orchards down there. I mean, they got no permission or nothing. They went down in the middle of the date orchards posted no hunting.

: Right. Yes.

: And starts plugging away with a 12-gauge shotgun at the doves and stuff. Now it's dove season, but this guy is on private property and what setting off some of the pellets fell on the roof of the house. Now the house we lived in, a drop of rain hitting it you could hear, because all it was was two by fours and plywood and tar paper, and that was it. And my father went down there and (phone ring) they left very rapidly.

: Yes.

: But he never considered dove hunting a sport just from where he was brought up. To him shooting a dove with a shotgun, he said, hell, by the time you shoot here there isn't enough left to eat anyway so why worry about it.

: Well, very few of those people are concerned with eating.

: That's true. That's true.

: But my father loves to hunt and he loves to shoot, that type of thing. That's the way I was brought up, but you don't just go out and shoot everything that moves.

: They've ruined a lot of what's down here. You used to

go out and find in the desert, the desert lily makes a, remember those, the cage. You used to be able to walk across the desert and find these, they're a regular stick.

: With the stalks coming up around the outside?

: Yes, the stalks came up and made a birdcage affair. Remember the desert lily that does that?

: I think so.

: And you used to be able to go out and find them all over the place.

: Yes.

: And they've been totally collected. Hunting, if you wanted to hunt down here, would be fantastic. You can't anymore. It's like a war. But you could see just covies of quail and just during dove season just big flights of dove. And you don't see them anymore.

: By the way, I also had a tame quail, and I want to tell you that if you get to know one as an individual, it's very, very hard to think of it as a target.

: I had a chicken operation when I was living on the ranch.

: Are you describing your operation? (laughter)

: No. (laughter)

: I'm on the defensive. (laughter) No, no, I was all for

chickens. Chickens were pets. And the culprit in this case was the coyotes. When they came in and they dug in the square chicken enclosure and they dug a hole on one side of the corner and on the other side of the corner and they barked into one hole and they drove all the chickens out except one. And that was the one that we called Gimpy. He couldn't make it through the hole.

: Well, she could have made it out, but she was so scared she just didn't leave.

: Ran around in a circle with

: I hated coyotes with a passion. And they were real pests after they'd done that.

: I understand.

: But I never went out and hunted them.

: Yes.

: But they were real pests. I don't hunt them to this day, but it . . .

: I haven't shot any living thing since before I went into the Air Force.

: Well, maybe it's a sign of maturity. (laughter)

: It could very well be.

: I hope so.

: Could very well be.

PY: is something you said earlier. You were talking about personality. In other words, if we had sort of finished that subject area.

: Oh, God!

PY: So wasn't this an area that attracted personalities and eccentric people?

: I think it attracted some people who wanted to be a big fish in a little pond.

: Well, then there's people like Andy the Donkey Man.

: He used to ride his donkey, no kidding. That was one of the things to do down here. Oh, this was when, Andy was old. He died when? Ten years ago or so.

: I believe so.

: All right. This was twenty years before that. And he was an old, old, old man then

: Even Gabby Hayes looked young.

: Yes.

:But he used to come down here, and he migrated in and out of the desert area.

: His donkeys were always down there right in the Rusty Pelican parking lot.

: That's right.

: Yes, this was even before that. He used to come out to

the ranch occasionally. He'd get clear over on Del Sol and let me ride the donkeys.

: Yes.

: And that was fun. Then I spent my childhood days, I was babysat during the day by a gal by the name of Martha Reed. And there's a whole bunch of dates that go out where we lived right along Country Club. And the next group over, which is Clancey Lane. And Martha owned the back portion of the dates which is now near the Edison Transformer Park. And Dad would go to work and dump me off there, and I'd run around the sand dunes and collect eggs. And occasionally I'd run across a nest of rotten eggs, and that was really fun because you could throw them at the date trees. I only did that once under threat of never coming back. But that was a fun area, too. And we'd go out and collect things and explore and live that way. She ended up going to Borego Springs.

: Had to get away from this metropolis.

: Yes, she had remarried.

: They've got a grass strip down there, don't they?

: They probably do. But that was an interesting part of it.

PY: I understand she had pigs and everything else.

: She had the world. Well, one of her goats was a goat that

I gave to a gal I was engaged to when I was in college. And the goat's name was Octamali, which was after the Redland's fight song. And that goat, I know

: That wasn't a Mexican word.

: That wasn't a Mexican (laughter)

: That was the first thing I thought of

: Straight tamali or Octamali.

: Yes.

: But she started out with chickens and some animals, and it got, they got more profuse as time went on. But, yes, at one point she did have a number of goats there. It was really fun. She was a neat person to grow up with. And she let me do almost anything I wanted. That was a lot of exploring time, going out in the desert. The homestead shacks were also another area where we explored it out.

: Yes.

: You'd go out to the shacks . . .

PY: This is in Palm Desert.

: This is in Palm Desert. Again, this is out in the Eisenhower area, out Country Club and Clancey Lane.

: I used to go, I used to hike up hills.

: That was a big exploring expedition. You'd take your canteen if you happened to have one. If not, a bottle of water. Trapsed out to the mountain down at the end of Beaver Tail Street and stuff, that little mound out there.

: There used to be a dump down there.

: We hunted some in the area; the quail and the dove would come in and out of the dates and the grapes back and forth. And we'd hunt there. We learned to use a gun, a shotgun, as well as a rifle. Hunting never took for that, but I'll hunt dove and quail today some. I haven't done it in fifteen years.

: I've never officially gone dove hunting or quail hunting or, as a, you know, take a shotgun, I've never, I have only touched off a shotgun once in my life. And that was just shooting a shotgun. That wasn't even . . . yes.

: Tell you something else we learned besides that as a kid, I used to drive a tractor all around the ranch.

: Oh, yes. Love it.

: And when you were ten years old, you learned to drive a tractor.

: Right.

: And you'd go ripping down, you never drove anywhere that

wasn't in third gear full speed.

: Well, yes.

: Unless you were working, and I disced and bordered and worked the date trees and sold the dates. I had my own date tree and sold the dates. All the relatives got packages of dates.

: Oh, of course. Yes.

: Off of my date tree. I couldn't afford anything else. That was it.

: Yes, as soon as I was old enough, I grew up helping my father. I did a lot of tractor work on the ranches and stuff. This is how I earned my allowance. I was doing tractor work, discing, building borders, shoveling, irrigating, and I grew up doing this in the citrus trees.

: Did you ever pick up, you know, the bags. You know what a liquor bag is.

: liquor bags.

: Yes, one-quart liquor bags is what they bagged the dates with.

: When you pollenate them.

: When you pollenate them, and you go out after the winds would come by, and it would blow the bags off. And I used to get a penny a bag for every one I picked up. It was

a way to make a living. You get into the big time making a living at the radio station, I was out picking one-litter bags dollar an hour. Well, you had a choice of a dollar an hour or high school credit.

: A dollar (chuckle) high school or what?

: My first job was at the A&P. My friend, Eddie Svant, big Eddie Svant, my buddy, went through high school, lived near me in the Sun Gold tract there in Indio. And he was the only one that had a nice car. (laughter) So we'd all go cruising in his car, you know. Where do you cruise out here? Well, Indio, Main Street, Miles Avenue.

: That's right.

: Cruise around. Then you'd go to the A&W and the Pink Onion.

: And the Pink Onion, that was, when that was big.

: Yes.

: And see who's at the Pink Onion, and usually it was a letdown. (laughter) But once in awhile we cruised around, and I remember taking a photograph when we used his car, you know. And I was sitting there with a girl in his car. Well, because my car, you know, my mother's car

: We're the first persons you ever told that it was really his car.

: No, I got a kick out of Eddie. What were we talking about? I lost my train of thought, go ahead.

: Jobs?

: Yes, A&P. Eddie had to quit work at the A&P, and I took his place as a box boy at the A&P. And I had never had a regular job before in my life, and that was quite a shock. But I cut it, you know, found out I could lift those fifty-pound bags or hundred-pound bags of flour, you know, little whimpy kid with . . . oh, I can do this, look at this. I remember one time when I had a large order carrying out to, on the cart, you know, over the bumpy driveway in back of the A&P to the car. And the lady had about a hundred dollars worth of groceries, which was quite a bit then.

: Yes.

: And on the top she had . . .

: In one cart?

: Yes.

: Might have been two for a hundred bucks in those days.

: Yes, well, maybe it was fifty, I don't

Some astronomical number, you know.

: Yes, right.

: More than I'd get paid in a week. She had some bleach, she had some flour, she had some meat, she had this and that, laundry detergent, and everything. And I hit a bump with that thing and it went up over the top and the bleach broke and went in the meat and then the flour bag broke. And I managed to cream the whole lot of the groceries, you know

: In one fell swoop.

: Yes.

: Just one shot.

: And Mr. Lucero ran the A&P, and what was his first name? It's interesting because I think maybe it was Bob or something like that. I can't remember his first name. Sorry. But one day after I worked there for about a year, I said, "Is it okay if I call you Bob?" And he says, "I think Mr. Lucero would be more appropriate." (laughter) He was a man of few words, so I continued calling him Mr. Lucero. And I met a lot of people there and sometimes they'd tip me. I remember a black family tipped me a nickel around Christmastime. They said, "I know it ain't much, but every little bit helps." You know. And people were really nice to deal with. And I would . . .

: It was a lot tighter community then. I mean, the people in a small town are a lot more neighborly.

: I mean if you were out someplace and had a flat tire, your car broke down, two or three people would stop to help you.

: Yes.

: You get a flat tire today and four hundred of them will right past you.

: Yes, it's a whole different thing. For all of our sophistication, we've lost something in the process, I'm afraid.

: Yes.

: Where people helping people. I worked at McNevin, no, what is now McNevin's, but it used to be Ostler's.

: Ostler's Paint Store. Summer of fifty-six, and during the school year, too. Stack and paint cans and sweep it out and he used to make more mess. That place would get to be an absolute pig pen. I had cleaned it out and it would look halfway decent, and it would get . . .

: Yes.

: He was a painting contractor.

: I hope Ersel hears this. (laughter)

: Wouldn't bother me. He's a nice guy, but he's long, he's

not in the area anymore.

: No, no.

: I was one of the few people that knew that the man that worked in the meat department didn't wash his hands after he used the toilet. (laughter) He took the third pork chop. Never the first cut. (laughter) Little bits and pieces of information. (laughter) It was rather funny looking back on it. I remember I had a kind of illicit secret date with a girl who'd come into the A&P and had let me know that she'd like to get me alone, or you know, I mean, I'd never done anything. I didn't know exactly what I was going to do, but something, you know.

: Sounded good anyway.

: Sounded good, you know. And so, all we did was drive around town for about an hour, you know, and I got, you know, just the thought of it, that was about it, you know. Very frustrated. Oh, yes, I remember she kissed me, and she had that kind of lipstick that just all over you. (laughter) But, you know, talked a good game and said, "Well, (Laughter) I realize I wasn't ready, you know, so I just dropped her off somewhere. One of the things that cooled it down as well as driving

around, one of the cars coming the other way was my mother driving some other car. (laughter) That changed everything.

: Usually cruising around town with some . . .

: Then I told, there was this guy named Bill who worked there. He was one of the grown-up type thirties guys who worked in the A&P (laughter) and well, you should have told me, he says, I got some rubbers at home, so I would have given you one. And I said, Oh, yes. God. You know, because I had one of those in my wallet once. (laughter) The only one I'd ever had, you know, that somebody gave me, you know. And I lost my wallet at the . . .

: Practically an heirloom. (laughter)

: I lost my wallet at the Aladdin Theatre, and some girl found it, I guess, and I had to come back and ask. And the rubber was in my wallet. This was my only other experience with it. And so I had to come back and ask, anybody find a little brown wallet with a little in it. (laughter) And the girl handed it back to me that worked at the Aladdin. And she gave me the funniest look. I knew she knew. So that was my only experience with that, and then this guy said, he'd give me one. I

said, "Oh, great, bring it." And somehow he always forgot to bring it. (laughter) I think I know why now. (laughter) Do you have an area we haven't covered?

PY: No, you've covered everything. (laughter)

: Since you guys won't talk about your sex life

: We didn't grow up very fast in this valley.

: That's an understatement.

: At least I sure as heck didn't.

: No, it was limited growth, limited experience.

: Yes, limited experience. But I think it was probably more limited even for what I would quote and unquote the hood that were, the rougher element.

: Yes.

: I think it was probably a lot more limited than they let on.

: Well.

: They just had a better lie.

: If you quote not some chick up, you got married, usually.

: Oh, yes.

: I remember a guy named Red. I can't remember his last name. There was this beautiful Mexican girl. Like she was just so great, and all of us were panting about how pretty she was and how great it would be to do something

with her that we never tried anyway. (chuckle) And she was going out with this guy named Red, had red hair. And he was kind of fat and dumpy. And she got, I guess she got pregnant, and they got married. Geez, I hope Red isn't listening. (laughter) He'll come after me. (laughter) But that was something. I mean, the two of them seemed like, you know, maybe they really loved each other, you know. They may still be married, but I don't know how you felt when you saw things like that happen, you know. I remember a very pretty girl . . .

: It scared the heck out of you.

: Yes. And kind of said, I'm not going to get near it, you know.

: Yes.

: Very pretty girl, senior in high school, you know. I noticed that all of a sudden her complexion looked different and things, and then all of a sudden she wasn't going to high school anymore, you know.

: Yes.

: What ever happened to what's her name?

: Had a baby by mistake, and that was really, there was no choice. That was it. There was no option.

: That wasn't the mistake.

: It wasn't somebody's mistake. (laughter)

: Yes, maybe she had it to get out of a whole situation. That could have been.

: It was a very small sheltered town.

: Yes.

: No question about it.

: It was a big old small town U.S.A.

: Took your life in your hands driving from where you lived to the high school, especially the way we did it. We took, Larry's mother gave him a 1929 Model A that she had had since it was new and had been in their garage. And Larry and I got that thing running, and we used to drive it as soon as we got our licenses, man. This twenty-nine Model A Ford, Larry about three months before, because he was six foot four and nobody ever asked him. And we would drive from here in Palm Desert to Indio High School. And in the afternoon, especially when it started getting hot, would be coming back and about We'd top off that big house up in the hill there by Airlawn Gardens, Indian Wells, and coming down that slight incline there, it would drop a cylinder. Every afternoon we'd come in on three cylinders, and that night as soon as it cooled down and the engine

cooled down, we'd tear it apart and we'd break the valve guide in that twenty-nine Model A, and we couldn't figure out what we were doing wrong. One, about, this went on for about a month and one time Larry's Uncle John was down, and he used to

the kids are working on the car, you know, Model A. And we'd take the Model A all apart. We'd pull the head on it. By this time, it's like an old washer and it just kind of falls apart. It's been together and apart so many times. And we're putting the valve guide in, you know, keeping dropping this valve guide, Uncle John. We just can't understand. He says, "Well, boys, if you'd put it in rightside up, it will last longer." And the Model A is probably the only car in the world that you can put parts in upside down and it will still run.

: It will still run.

: That valve guide would retract every afternoon, and it'd start (sound effects) and we'd come in on three.

: I never worked on cars. I didn't have carpentry experience. I missed not having those skills even now. But what I did do is play with tape recorders. And in the days before Les Paul and Mary Ford. I was sitting at home overdubbing on two, both of them borrowed, couldn't

afford a tape recorder to save my ass. Both of them running . . .

: Yes.

AO: Recording on one and playing back on the other and adding harmony parts on songs. And I was getting my education in what I'm doing now with the stuff I was playing around at home. There wasn't anything in school that approached that.

: Right. And what I'm doing now, just tinkering, out on the ranches and stuff, changing the plugs and stuff in the tractors, getting them running, cleaning them up and getting them where they're ready to go. Now I'm repairing valves and automatic box and stuff, and that's what I like to do. I like to work with my hands.

: Yes.

: I can't figure out where I got what I'm doing. (chuckle) I swore up and down, Dad being in the construction business, I would never go in the construction business.

: Well, that's a very common thing that you hear.

: I love it!

: Yes.

: I'm better at it than he is in terms of being able to adjust to it because I think I saw his point of view and

the other point of view and it's neat. I think it's the people. I would have been, I probably would have been running ranches with my father, which would have been very lucrative. And managing ranches, like range management or something like that is what my father had in the back of his mind. And then ding dong here comes down. I am deathly allergic to date palms. Can't run a date ranch without getting around palm because pollination is your whole crop. And I break out in hives and I sneeze for an hour at a time.

: I can relate to that.

: And just, I just cannot function. I can get one whiff of active date palm, and you can write me off for an hour. I can take a shower, I can . . .

: It's in you.

: That's it. Antihistamines, it numbs you, but you still, your eyes are, oh!

: I'm allergic to about fifty different things. I give myself shots three times a week of the antigens for the things I'm allergic to.

: Yes, I used to . . .

: I know exactly what . . . And then some

it's all in your head. It's all in your head, they'll say

about the allergies.

: Of course, my sinuses, you dummy, that's where it is. (laughter) Where do you think my sinuses are, in my foot? (laughter)

: My nose in my head, that's what hurts. It leaks, it hurts.

: We're approaching the medical part of this whole tape now. We're going to talk about our illnesses.

: It's funny how people move down here because of medical problems.

: We're just controlling problems.

: Yes, but now we're facing them even further.

: Even down here.

: Yes.

: I had worse trouble here than I have anywhere else in the world.

: I do, too.

: And yet I was healthier down here because of the climate growing up. Maybe it's changed.

: In the Springs I don't get much trouble, but here I do because Palm Springs has so much more cement that the pollen doesn't have a chance to grow.

: Yes, but then in La Quinta, oh, forget it!

: And the stuff, and the bermuda grasses for the most part well manicured in Palm Springs.

: Yes.

: I spent . . . you're absolutely right.

: Now Roberts' front yard could be a death trap for you and me.

: You don't know what I went through (laughter) yesterday to mow that lawn just so it would look decent for you guys to come over.

: Oh, I know what you went through

: What else? I think . . .

: I knew you were running out of time.

: Really, that's where my sinuses went.

: Yes.

: I'm going to have to go here pretty quick, too.

: That didn't cover our dressing.

: That didn't. We enjoyed it.

: Just scratched it. I think we just scratched the surface. I think we'll all start remembering things.

: Yes, that's the trouble. That's why I wanted a bunch of people here because you just start thinking of things.

: All things start at midnight.

: Yes. So if everybody wants to do this again for any reason,

and if you want to, to cover any areas that you come up with, why I'll come down and be down, too, because I enjoyed it.

: Who knows, maybe we'll just have a barbecue.

: Yes, that's fine. (laughter)

END OF INTERVIEW